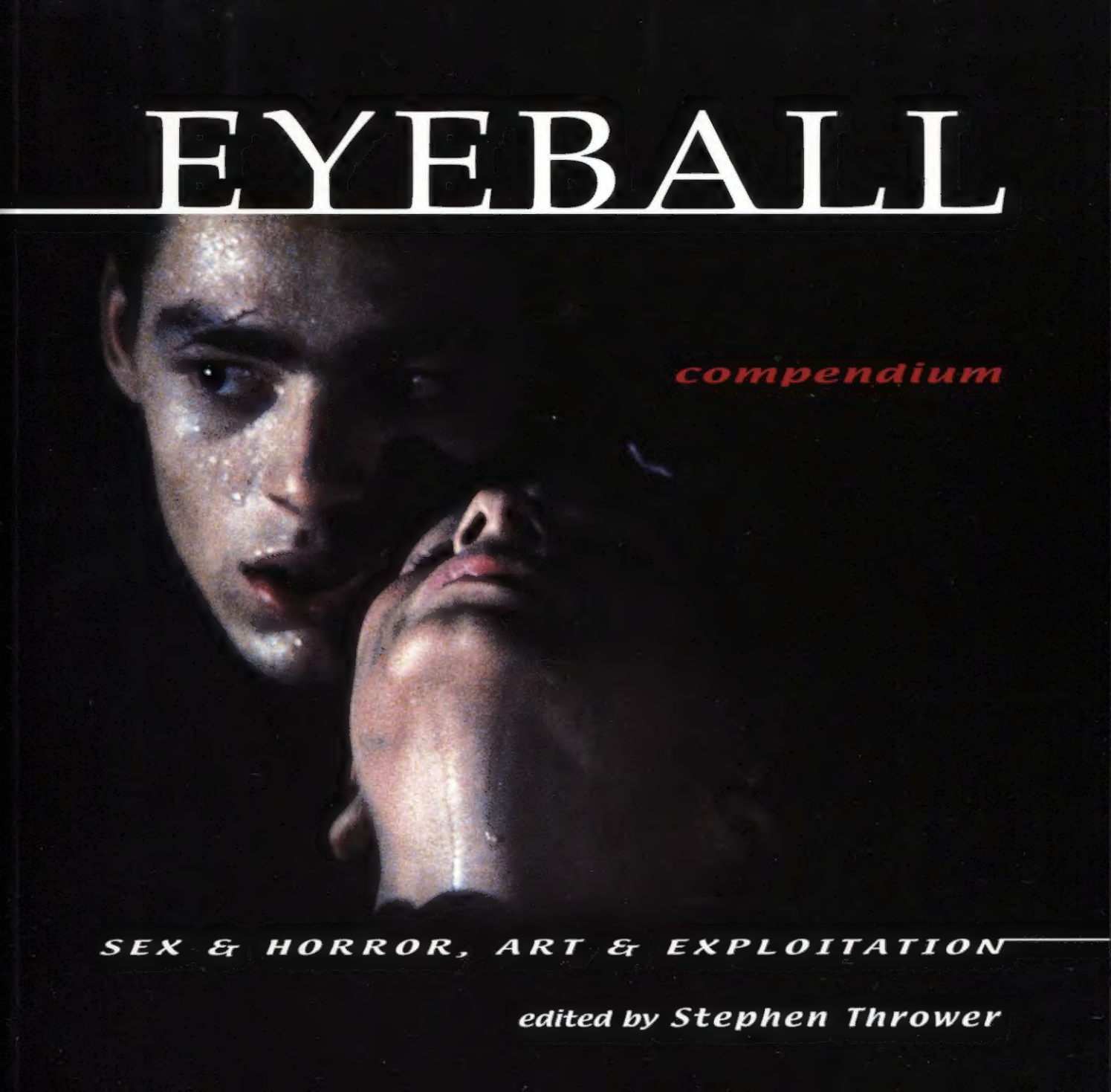


EYEBALL



compendium

SEX & HORROR, ART & EXPLOITATION

edited by Stephen Thrower



EYEBALL

Compendium

*Writings on sex and horror in the cinema
from the pages of Eyeball Magazine, 1989 - 2003*

edited by Stephen Thrower

EYEBALL COMPENDIUM

First edition published October 2003
by FAB Press

FAB Press
7 Farleigh
Ramsden Road
Godalming
Surrey
GU7 1QE
England, U.K.

www.fabpress.com

Text copyright © 1989-2003 Stephen Thrower
and individual contributors.

This Volume copyright © FAB Press 2003
World Rights Reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without the prior written permission of the Publisher.

Copyright of illustrations is the property of the production or distribution companies concerned. These illustrations are reproduced here in the spirit of publicity, and whilst every effort has been made to trace the copyright owners, the editors and publishers apologise for any omissions and will undertake to make any appropriate changes in future editions of this book if necessary.

Front cover illustration:

Tras el cristal (In a Glass Cage)

Back cover illustration:

Blood From the Mummy's Tomb

Inside front cover illustration:

Apocalypse domani (Cannibal Apocalypse)

Inside back cover illustration:

Flesh For Frankenstein

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the
British Library

ISBN 1 903254 17 5





*in memory of Jeff Hildreth, whose love and support made the first three
issues of Eyeball possible*

The interview with Gaspar Noé first appeared in *Post Script*. The interview with George Barry first appeared on the *Lightsfade* website. The article 'S.F. Brownrigg's Southern Blues' first appeared in a different form in *Shock Xpress*. Reviews of AUTOPSIA, NIGHT OF THE DEVILS and PINK NARCISSUS first appeared in a different form in *Shock Xpress*. Reviews of AMITYVILLE 2: THE POSSESSION, CANNIBAL APOCALYPSE, PLOT OF FEAR, TERROR EXPRESS and L'UOMO, LA DONNA, LA BESTIA first appeared in a different form in *Delirium Magazine* and *The Delirium Guide To Italian Exploitation Cinema 1975-1979*. The review of DEATH BED: THE BED THAT EATS first appeared on the *Lightsfade* website.

Thanks to Daniel Bird, Francis Brewster, Harvey Fenton, Alan Jones and Adrian Smith for stills assistance. Special thanks to Marc Morris.

Designed by Stephen Thrower.

INTRODUCTION

p.6

INTERVIEWS

p.11

FEATURES

p.77

REVIEWS

p.183

INDEX

p.382

INTRODUCTION

p6

Hello again, and here we go... I doubt that this final editorial will really summarize what *Eyeball* was all about, but I hope to at least scan the terrain and add a few general thoughts before stepping back and letting the book do its thing. I've no grand narrative to offer you, but I don't suppose anyone's expecting it anyway, so onwards...

Eyeball was the magazine most likely to juxtapose Jean-Luc Godard and Joe D'Amato, taking the supposed highs and lows of (principally European) cinema culture and interlacing them. The seed was my love for the fantastical horror films of Dario Argento, Mario Bava and Lucio Fulci, and they in turn led me further and further into the Euro-horror jungle (quite literally at times, with films like *CANNIBAL HOLOCAUST*). There was something fascinating, disobedient, edgy and perverse about Europe's horror cinema, but I didn't want to celebrate this at the expense of an appreciation of Alain Resnais, Michaelangelo Antonioni etc, so I was soon looking for a way to gradually merge the two areas. The art film lover usually sneers at the 'crudities' of exploitation, and likewise the gorehound usually scoffs at the 'pretensions' of so-called art cinema. To me there's no need for this, when the real enemy is the mainstream of commercial cinema. The perfect *Eyeball* director is someone like Dario Argento or Alejandro Jodorowsky, Andrzej Zulawski or Lars Von Trier, Nicolas Roeg or Gaspar Noé, whose films are too perverse and threatening, too hard to classify, too bizarre and wayward to sit exclusively in either camp. Too arty for the average horror fan, too strange and cruel for the bourgeois art scene. Jodorowsky said to me, "I think, with the horror picture, there is now the only possibility of freedom and poetry". Andrzej Zulawski said that if a Martian came to Earth and asked 'what is cinema?', one film you should screen is *THE TEXAS CHAIN SAW MASSACRE*. Movies that engage with the darker side of life, be it visceral, psychological or philosophical - this was the essence and ethos of *Eyeball*.

I first discussed the idea of starting a European horror film magazine with Mark Ashworth back in 1988, and Mark was a close collaborator for the first two issues. Much of the content of the early *Eyeballs* sprang from our shared love of both the celestial and the sleazy in Italian genre cinema. However, the magazine was a precarious creature in the early 1990s, thanks to the life I was leading at the time. Pretty much permanently fried on chemicals and disinclined to get a regular job (some things never change), I spent most of the money I made from music and other pursuits on self-prescribed cartloads of amphetamine and LSD. Many of the earlier reviews I wrote were the result of watching films in this ecstatically deranged state. With a group of similarly reckless

friends, I delighted in wading through the most extreme cinematic wonders we could find: art, weirdness and sexual brutality were enmeshed in self-programmed marathon all-nighters: juxtaposing *BEAST IN HEAT* and *TENEBRAE* with *THE BEYOND* and *DON'T LOOK IN THE BASEMENT*, *AUTOPSIA* and *LAST HOUSE ON DEAD END STREET* with *SHOCK* and *BEYOND THE DARKNESS*. Quite honestly some of the finest times of my life so far. Happy trails and all that...

It couldn't last forever: insidiously at first and then rudely and irreversibly, those kamikaze chickens came home to roost. Depression, speed psychosis that wasn't funny any more, paranoia in cheap shit rooms, suicidal loathing, head-lock nihilism. Friends went bonkers and peeled away to nurse their own troubles, relationships twisted and snapped...

But hey, we've all been there... so let's change the record. After a few years in the void, *Eyeball* reappeared in a healthier and more sustainable form for a couple of issues in the late 1990s. Detoxing the editor meant things were getting done again, and around this time I began work on what would be my first book, *Beyond Terror: The Films of Lucio Fulci*. But there were different problems for *Eyeball* to deal with - this time external. Stores that used to buy in fringe or alternative magazines were no longer free or willing to do so, and besides, film production in Europe was a shadow of its former self. The sad fact was that Italy, previously a wellspring of movie horror, was a cultural desert in the 1990s. Argento went off the boil, Soavi was stumbling, Fulci was dead, Lenzi and Deodato, patchy at the best of times, were totally withered. Even Bruno Mattei had lost it...

The situation actually took root as early as 1986, before *Eyeball* even began. By 1999, there simply was no concentrated horror genre, at least not as we'd understood it ten or fifteen years before. The scourge of big budget, bogus-cool brand-name horror had arrived, and I for one saw nothing to engage with. Once you've had *TWITCH OF THE DEATH NERVE* and *THE NEW YORK RIPPER* there's no turning back: franchises with airbrushed bints from crap US TV shows chased by wisecracking dudes whose ambitions would be better served hosting *MTV Unplugged* are simply no substitute...

But *Eyeball* worked despite the blood-and-trauma recession. Firstly, it was a place to write about films regardless of their release date. Secondly, it veered impulsively away from the more obvious definitions of horror and through into the darker regions of 'art' cinema. And thirdly - I simply dropped the requirement that a film be European. That cleared the way for an interview with Paul Morrissey, reviews of literary Cronenbergs (*NAKED LUNCH*) and paens to sicko US trash (*DON'T GO IN THE HOUSE*).



EYEBALL #1 - 1989



EYEBALL #2 - 1990



EYEBALL #3 - 1992



EYEBALL #4 - 1996



EYEBALL #5 - 1998

"The European Sex and Horror Review", I proclaimed, from the cover of the first two editions, and for some it was a betrayal of that claim when I started covering films from elsewhere. Why did I change the template? Well: boredom, capriciousness, perversity, bloody-mindedness... I think that covers it... Actually, the later editions have a formidably expanded range of European coverage, thanks largely to the work of Daniel Bird who brought a dedicated attention to the surreal and frequently horrific cinema of Eastern Europe.

The other change that swept through *Eyeball* for a while was my interest in analytical approaches to film writing. This was a passion that came and went, for me: leaving, I hope, some worthwhile traces but burning out after a few years reading largely unappealing muck on spectatorship and the gendered gaze. I've come to think that film critics of this stripe have two options: 1) write rigorous but dry-as-dust prose to be published in University Press editions for those poor fuckers slogging through degree courses on 'Modern Media and its Relationship to the Soapy Tit Wank Theory of Authorship'. Or alternatively, drop the worst of the jargon, try some style and humour, actually mention the films you're reviewing from time to time, and get over your decentred self as fast as possible. I admit I've written things that fail as pure analysis (he said modestly) but I hope I've never neglected style, readability and a focus on the work rather than the interpretative apparatus. If you've written a piece about Andrea Bianchi, and Michel Foucault is mentioned more often than Mariangela Giordano, I'd say there's a problem...

That's not to say *Eyeball* restricts itself to "just the facts, ma'am". I've noticed over the years that some readers have a problem with reviews that refuse to 'ground' their interpretations in the director's stated intention - critics who concern themselves with describing and questioning their own response to a film are sometimes dismissed as self-indulgent. To me this subjective approach is at the heart of what I like to see in a review, and I believe there's good reason. The truth of a film is not to be found simply by scrutinising the soul of the film-maker. We need to give of ourselves too. Venturing to do this isn't merely narcissism or self-promotion. It's by exploring our own feelings and responses that we in turn stimulate the reader to look again at theirs. To write purely from a journalistic impulse, seeking to 'ferret out' the

director's intentions, is to neglect an essential part of the equation. Films happen in our heads, not just in the diaries, scrapbooks and script annotations of their makers!

If we go to see a film with another person, we don't usually stand around afterwards swapping anecdotes about the circumstances of the production (fascinating though they might be). These are peculiarities of the printed word. No - we're charged with energy (if the film's any good) and we spend our first precious moments afterwards either silent and dazed, or discussing with friends our sense of what we've seen. Of course, the best film writing makes room for both background research and self-examination. It's nice to be called a 'scholar' but really we're all viewers here, with feelings and passions and questions. Hence there are reviews in this book which are basically casual, fan-oriented strolls through a film, notable for their geniality rather than their in-depth analysis. Other pieces display more complex attempts to relate to a film, exploring the way its ideas join up with the surrounding culture as well as unfolding the feelings it inspires. Such then is *Eyeball* - wide-ranging in both its content and style.

European horror movies were not really celebrated back in the 1980s. There were a few pioneers of course - Alan Jones, Tim Lucas, Craig Ledbetter - and a select few movies had been 'lifted from the mire' and given praise (Mario Bava and Riccardo Freda's early work for instance). But it's not so long ago that it was considered a notch below eccentric - in fact closer to ridiculous - to express admiration for Jean Rollin, or Lucio Fulci, or even Mario Bava after 1965... As for Umberto Lenzi, Ruggero Deodato, Jess Franco... well, you had to be kidding. The films were dubbed for chrissakes! They had no plots! Or, if they did have plots, you could drive an overused road haulage metaphor through the holes! And besides, they were too violent, too sleazy, and really rather tasteless. John Carpenter you could take home to meet your mother. But Joe D'Amato?

Lucio Fulci was past his peak by the time *Eyeball* was published but his best horror films were still a major source of pleasure for me. Argento's characters may bleed, but Fulci's characters sweat as they die! There's a tactile, organically permeable rankness and decay in Fulci's Gothic work that makes Argento feel almost prissy in comparison. (Reviews from *Eyeball*

#1 and 2 of A LIZARD IN A WOMAN'S SKIN and DON'T TORTURE A DUCKLING are not included here, however, because they were absorbed into my book *Beyond Terror* and I preferred not to recycle myself again. The same goes for a piece on TENEBRAE that I wrote with Chris Barber, which has since appeared in Chris Gallant's *Art of Darkness*. Fulci was definitely *persona non grata* to most genre critics, so when I saw his films dismissed as badly made, reprehensible, or in some way unworthy, it gave me the impetus to engage with film as a writer. Films I loved were being misrepresented or scorned, and it wasn't just the Italians who suffered - after seeing a film like THE BROOD I knew I was in radical opposition to those who disdained it as "a guided tour around Mr Cronenberg's vomitorium" (to quote some loser at the time). The music press were more astute: writers such as Paul Morley, Ian Penman and Angus McKinnon spoke for the feelings I was carrying from the theatre and they too fed my urge to write.

The debate about violence against women in the cinema (that's on the screen, not in the aisles...) was really gaining ground in the mid 1980s, and kicking against its more oppressive facets was another essential part of the background to *Eyeball*. Seeing a clever and provocative film like Dario Argento's TENEBRAE attacked for misogyny gave me further drive for a counter-attack. (Mind you, the director didn't always make it easy... Unlike Cronenberg, Argento was not a smooth and credible self-exegising figure. He was apt to make his tenuous grip on credibility more precarious by saying things like "I would much rather watch a beautiful woman being mutilated than an ugly woman or a man."!) But bad taste has its own shades of grey and if you want to see misogyny there are far more clear-cut examples than Argento - I've reviewed several Nazi-themed exploitation films in this book: THE BEAST IN HEAT, WOMEN'S CAMP 119, THE GESTAPO'S LAST ORGY. Horror fans over 30 are probably bored rigid with them by now, but they're still capable of offending and/or amusing newcomers. The film-makers may want us to be shocked and sleazily turned on, and whilst we might play along, it's usually with a sense of disgusted amusement that we see these scuzzy Italian products, viewing them as sick jokes, with a queasy but mildly bored sense that we're fishing around in the lowest detritus of 'shock'.

Despite the poor taste of such movies, I still have no time for censorship of simulated acts, whatever's being depicted. I believe in a strict differentiation between representation and actuality. To film a real murder, to point a camera at a genuine rape or the abuse of a child, is a completely different matter, a real crime taking place before the camera. But I believe no thought is so vile that it *should not* be expressed in artistic form. In art (no matter how crude or debased), nothing is sacred except the freedom to explore. PINK FLAMINGOS director John Waters told murderers and sex criminals under his tuition at the Baltimore State Pen: "Next time you feel like killing somebody, don't do it, for God's sake - write about it, draw it, paint it - because these films I make are my crimes, only I get paid for them." It's in this context that I stand by the sovereign right of the artist to say or do whatever the hell he

likes. I don't care if the 'artist' is a hack, I don't even care if he's a racist homophobic asshole. 'Life imitates art' be damned! The audience has to take responsibility for their actions. We are not innocent. We are not victims. We choose our entertainments and we can choose our responses.

Moving on to rather more sophisticated forms of provocation, regular readers know that I hold Andrzej Zulawski's POSSESSION in the very highest esteem. I struggle to explain my view of the film in a review at the end of this book (which I was sorely tempted to re-write!). I recall that I grew to appreciate the friction between art films and genre films thanks to this extraordinary piece of work, which seems as bizarre and indefinable now as it did in the winter of 1982 when I first saw it. POSSESSION is a troublesome package, an elusive and contrary creature. I watched it first on video with a friend, both of us eager to see whatever horror-related extremes we could. POSSESSION rammed the antagonistic energies up to 11 and left me and my friend raging, arguing and thoroughly, passionately confused! I honestly could not decide if it was the greatest thing I'd ever seen or the most maddeningly pretentious. It was a defining moment in my viewing.

This blast from the border between art film and horror reminds me of a strange book I found in a public library when I was 13 or 14 years old. Looking in the cinema section for stuff about Dracula and Frankenstein, I found a book about a film called LAST YEAR AT MARIENBAD. Instead of scary pictures of faces covered in grotesque make-up, I found a book packed with haunting images of distracted, glacial, ambiguous figures interacting in the most obscure way within an opulent but ominous chateau. Unease seemed elusively everywhere. The text refused to name the 'participants': they were called X and Y, etc... For many people MARIENBAD is the quintessential poseur's paradise. All I can say is that I felt an instinctive fascination when I saw its images arranged in a book, and when I finally saw the film it didn't disappoint me. It takes us to another place, sailing adrift from the structural values of other movies. Films like MARIENBAD nag and irritate and infuriate, beckon and provoke and intrigue, and I'm pleased to be including a suitably intricate account of the film in this book.

The expectation that movies will provide the narrative so obviously lacking in life is what keeps mainstream cinema alive. Although to reject narrative form is not a virtue in itself, avant-garde cinema offers further adventures away from convention. British experimental cinema is virtually ignored even in film magazines like *Sight and Sound*, which is a shame, considering that we can point to artists of the magnitude of David Lauder, a neglected genius in Great Britain. Well - neglected is a presumptuous word, there were at least 50 people at the screening of MARE'S TAIL I attended at the Tate Modern last year... Larcher is as special as Brakhage, Anger, Warhol, Svankmajer. He's a polymath and musician of the image, whose films embody such highly concentrated invention and humanity that I'm afraid the likes of Peter Greenaway are left looking rather bereft. In the course of this book, I hope you'll find

interest in the coverage and seek out Larcher's work - some of the most astonishing cinema you'll ever see.

The urge to seek out pleasures from beyond the idle current of the mainstream is vital to the spirit of this book. Let's hope that the next fifteen years bring more than just the urge to scrutinize the past. I'm sometimes plagued with a sense that cinema's greatest achievements are behind it. We've all felt this, I'm sure. Even the nostalgia has the taint of a previous sensation. Should we then choose a facile postmodernism? You'll never catch me at that game. And anyway, whilst this book is necessarily backward-looking to a degree, the emergence of films like Gaspar Noé's *IRREVERSIBLE* and the continued relevance of directors like Lars Von Trier suggests that future magazines drawn to the volatile margins of cinema will have new obsessions to explore.

Last but by no means the least of the key influences on *Eyeball* are the warped concerns, aesthetic perversions and idiosyncratic personal theories oozing (and I mean that caringly, possums) from my friends and valued acquaintances over the years. Born of their own obscure personal scarring, their writing speaks for itself - I take no credit and can only wonder... Let it not be said that I wrote lovingly about scat sex films - I merely gave people a corner to do what they felt compelled to do! (If you're reading this Charlie, I know: *nicht ist pervers!*)

So I'll end with this roll-call of the damned - thanks to all of you. And I hope we all live to see another golden era of horror (Euro or otherwise), at least the equal of the one that inspired me to start a magazine. Let's open those neural floodgates!

Mark Ashworth lives in Rome and works as an actor and dialogue coach in the Italian film industry.

Chris Barber is a situationist, ex-rent boy and fugitive on the run, currently preparing a book on Punk Cinema with Jack Sargent.

Daniel Bird has moved to Poland and writes for a number of Polish magazines whilst developing ideas for film scripts.

Paul Buck is writing a book on Paris through its cinema, and working on a fiction derived from his encounter with Kathy Acker.

Nigel Burrell is the co-editor of *Uncut* magazine and continues to harbour an unspeakable love of cinema.

Ramsey Campbell's book *Ramsey Campbell, Probably* received the Stoker Award of the Horror Writers' Association for Superior Achievement in Non-Fiction, 2002. *SECOND NAME*, a film based on his recent novel, *Pact of the Fathers*, is due out soon.

Daniel Craddock edits and runs the film website *Lightsfade*.

Travis Crawford programs films for the Philadelphia Festival of World Cinema, and has contributed articles to *Filmmaker*, *Fangoria*, *Film Comment* and *Village Voice*.

Mitch Davis is the International Programmer at Montreal's Fantasia Film Festival and directs unnerving, personal movies like *DIVIDED INTO ZERO*.

Max Décharné has moved to Germany and continues to make music with The Flaming Stars.

Foxy Gifford wonders if the grafts are going to take.

Stefan Jaworzyn keeps himself to himself.

Alan Jones runs t'ings, including the excellent *Frightfest* every year at London's Prince Charles Cinema.

David Kerekes edits the wonderful *Headpress* books

Martin King is invisible in this book but haunts the dark corridors. **Craig Ledbetter** no longer writes about film, but through his old publication *European Trash Cinema* was the No.1 trailblazer for all those Euro-horror movies you can now buy so easily on DVD...

Tim Lucas stop press - Tim has changed his mind and will not be publishing a book on Mario Bava after all - he's doing John Hughes instead! Ahem... expect his colossal study of Bava, *All the Colors of the Dark*, very soon.

Kim Newman is an acclaimed novelist and Britain's foremost writer on horror and fantastic cinema.

Ron Peck has obtained French support for his next film, possibly to be made in Russia. That's British film financing for you...

Marcelle Perks has also moved to Germany: do you see a trend here?

Grant Pettitt hides his rampaging morbidity under the guise of a well adjusted family man who just happens to like sleazy movies.

Charlie Phillipps has escaped and may not be coming back.

Marcus Stiglegger is the author of *Sadiconazista*, a study of fascism and sexuality in the cinema. He also publishes *Ikonen*, a print and online magazine.

Martin Lindwedel is the co-author of *Wo nie zuvor ein Mensch gewesen ist* ('Where No Man Has Gone Before'), a philosophical and theological examination of science fiction films.

Anna Thew is currently working on a quartet of short films based around the seasons.

Pete Tombs runs the excellent *Mondo Macabro* DVD company and wrestles with demons at Channel 4.

David Prothero took his own life in 2001 and is sadly missed. I remember him as a warm and quick-witted individual, fun to be with, and very much liked and admired by those of us who knew him. I hadn't been in touch with Dave for nearly three years and we'd drifted out of contact for no particular reason. He had so many friends who would dearly have wished to come between him and the decision he made. If we are to respect a person's wish to end their life (as I believe we must at times) it's not without the sincerest wish to influence them against such a course. Someone once wrote 'The unexamined life is no life at all' - Dave was a questioner, possessed of a strong curiosity about the way of things. His taste in movies was idiosyncratic, always searching out treasures on the road less travelled. To pass from this to such total negation is a tragedy. All his friends on the film-writing circuit, Alan Jones, Kim Newman and particularly Mark Ashworth, were shocked and terribly saddened to hear the news of his suicide. Horror films don't always express a zest for life, but in happier times Dave had that quality - we can only mourn that it slipped away from him.



INTERVIEWS

p11

<i>Alejandro Jodorowsky</i>	Stephen Thrower, 1990	13
<i>Michele Soavi</i>	Mark Ashworth, 1989	17
<i>Paul Morrissey</i>	Stephen Thrower, 1996	21
<i>Chris Wicking</i>	Max Decharné, 1989	31
<i>Brian Avenet-Bradley</i>	Marcelle Perks, 2001	37
<i>Gaspar Noé</i>	Mitch Davis, 1998	41
<i>George Barry</i>	Daniel Craddock, 2002	49
<i>Paul Mayersberg</i>	Daniel Bird, 1998	53
<i>Andrzej Zulawski</i>	Stephen Thrower/Daniel Bird, 1998	60
<i>Ulli Lommel</i>	Stephen Thrower, 1998	73



Fantastic Crimes & Broken Logic

Alejandro Jodorowsky interviewed by Stephen Thrower

*Alejandro Jodorowsky's cinematic vision is at once eclectic and completely unique. Since 1968's **FANDO Y LIS** he has created a series of astonishing masterpieces, possessed of a surreal and often cruelly anarchic sensibility that delights in setting wildly divergent philosophies against each other. His 1969 cult classic **EL TOPO** throws twisted Catholicism and elements of Nietzsche's Thus Spake Zarathustra into the spaghetti western arena, and 1972's mind-boggling **THE HOLY MOUNTAIN** marimates Zen Bhuddism and alchemy with late '60's radical politics, then presents the result as a tripped-out science-fiction search for Enlightenment. After two epic frustrations, an aborted adaptation of Frank Herbert's *Dune* and the disastrous **TUSK**, the multi-talented auteur occupied himself for several years as a cartoonist whilst living in Paris. However, after a long hiatus, Jodorowsky returned to the cinema in 1989 with **SANTA SANGRE**, an ecstatic, furious head-rush through madness, violence and Freudian angst. With typical perversity, these source elements are transmuted into a bitter-sweet tale of self-redemption. His is a primal cinema - perhaps the common thread running through his work is the conflict between a metaphysical desire for meaning and his highly developed sense of the Absurd. If that sounds over the top, so be it. Jodorowsky's films demand that we stretch ourselves! But **SANTA SANGRE** is no more 'difficult' than David Lynch's or Dario Argento's cinema; Jodorowsky says he directed it "with his balls", and those who might have imagined they caught a whiff of 'art movie' from **SANTA SANGRE**, with all the attendant associations of boredom and posturing, should take note of that hilarious statement. It's true! Far away from sterile academic clichés, **SANTA SANGRE** seethes with vital energy. The same life-force characterises the man himself. His conversation is always agile and enquiring, at times disconcertingly so. Add to this his sudden bursts of winningly child-like enthusiasm for other people's work, and picture Sir Les Patterson with better personal grooming; now read on...*

You seem to have had bad experiences with your producers before, such as Alan Klein. **SANTA SANGRE seems to have been the first movie you've made that hasn't suffered from bad production...**

Yes...listen; I don't know what happened with me, when I make pictures - even when I am shooting - it's a scandal. The other day, to make a scene at Shepperton, I had to slap the executive producer! I had to because he couldn't understand my images. I'm not logical, my logic is... broken. I'm broken in the logic of continuity, of editing, of matching... logic is stupidity!

I like the way **EL TOPO seems to reach what would normally be its climax about an hour into the film, after the 4th Master is killed - in most movies that would be the end!** Well, I don't believe in endings, there is only continuation. But even in distribution there's trouble, they're afraid to

open my films. I understand, I'm not trying to be a Spielberg - I think that to be Spielberg must be a very sad thing. In England I like Greenaway, I just bought **BELLY OF AN ARCHITECT** yesterday - a very beautiful film.

Do you still enjoy the struggle involved in making such personal cinema?

Yes; it's always a fight, always pain. But what I really want now is to be my own producer. I can't stand having someone looking over my shoulder with opinions. Like the Americans say, "Everyone has an opinion!" Then they need to follow you, they want approximations of your images, you ask for 100 extras and you get 20, you fight for nothing, you have to explain everything, they're trembling, trembling... then they cut your picture! You have to make it for television, for children!

Do you have similar problems with the more creative

people involved in the movie? For instance, is it difficult to explain to a cameraman what you want?

Well, I never even take a photograph! You have to treat the cameraman... like a child, and give him chocolate, let him do some of what he wants to do, so that he also shoots what you tell him. Then later, in the editing, you cut him! It's an enormous compromise, like a woman - you have to indulge them, then cheat them to get what you want!

There are a lot of deformed people in your films...

I love them, I love them all. They're beautiful. To me, normal people are monstrous, because they are so similar. For me, difference is what is Art, what is life. I don't, like some, find it distressing. I don't call it deformity, it's... natural imagination - nature has a big imagination. Maybe for some people they're monsters, but not for me, I find beauty only in 'monstrosity'. I can't be realistic - even when I walk down the street, I find monsters. Everywhere! I have an exacerbated sensibility towards monstrosity! Whenever I see it, I'm happy. And anyway... nose, hair, ears, eyes - in the heart of normality, monstrosity is there! Human flesh is... strange!

How was it working with the 'Down's Syndrome' people in the asylum sequences?

Well, they are so poor, so they were very happy to be paid, and also happy just to do something. I told the actors to give them contact and encouragement all the time, because they lack courage. After one hour of this contact we started to shoot, and they were very happy, it was like a paradise for them because they were well fed and they loved the attention. I showed the rushes to them - it was the most happy moment of the picture. Obviously I'm sad about them, but it's OK because it gave happiness to shoot with them. Society hides them, and feels good for hiding them, but in myself I feel better because I gave them something to do.

It's a weakness, but I find them quite disturbing.

Well... they're real, it's just another level of intelligence. And in their reality, they're normal.

Do you think they're in any mental anguish?

No! They're not in anguish; like innocent people, they are very happy - they're in anguish if they are treated bad, or isolated. But they are full of love, full... I think in our society intelligence is used in competitive and very cruel ways. Intelligent people are very cruel.

There's an argument that says self-awareness is an evolutionary dead-end, unproductive and needlessly complicating. Do you think our intelligence is something that should never have developed?

No, I don't believe that. But I think that if we develop only intelligence we become a perfect idiot! If you develop intellect without feelings, that makes for an arid aspect of the human being. We need to develop other ways to think. Intuition - intuition is not intelligence but it is very important. Imagination is the same...

But imagination requires self-reflexiveness, doesn't it? The ability to recognise your own thoughts...

Well... I studied Zen Bhuddism for some years. I was an intellectual, but I broke from that. Look at the fluctuation of the dollar - for all our great intelligence no-one knows why, it's a mystery. It's a mystery how the world works, no-one is controlling that. The closer we get, the further away we are.

Like the weather, the red spot on Jupiter - inherently unpredictable...

We are not living in an intelligent world. But these kind of thoughts can be presented in Art. When I'm making a film, I have my script - in one shot say, the chair is in one position, in the next shot they say to me, 'you can't do that, in this shot the chair is here, you'll affect the continuity!' In myself, I know what I'm looking for in the image, and in that moment, the chair is not important for me. I don't mind if it doesn't match. When you're shooting, and in every area of life, you are fighting logic, and form. You have here in England a very interesting psychologist, or scientist, I don't know what, called Edward de Bono. Twenty years ago I read all his books about lateral thinking. It was very useful for me making my films - he was talking about another position, another attitude to thinking. And because I'm crazy, because I still believe in Art, you need another position. For instance, in this picture I'm doing now, a person is living with a rat, and they say 'This picture is too expensive.' I ask 'Why?' and they tell me they need to make an artificial rat to do everything the script is saying. And so I say 'But you're crazy, we'll use a real rat, and we'll follow what the rat does!' 'Oh, you'll improvise??' They're horrified! Sure I'll improvise, the RAT will improvise!! I'll shoot what the rat does and change the script to fit! They went crazy - it took me two days to convince them not to use an artificial rat! (This movie was released as **THE RAINBOW THIEF** starring Omar Sharif and Christopher Lee.)

Paul Naschy's film THE HUNCHBACK OF THE MORGUE features a scene where live rats are set on fire and run around in flames - would you do that?

Not now. When I made **EL TOPO** I would! I had a theory; twenty years ago I thought 'Inhumanity, sacrifice, death - they are always there, so I must have the presence of death

in my pictures also.' I would be happy to die whilst shooting - it would be nice to commit suicide in front of the camera. As for animals, I always killed poisonous animals, or animals to eat. We kill millions of sheep, millions of cows, and yet on film I can't kill a cow! But when killing an animal on film, at the moment of shooting, it became like a sacred thing. I was able myself to give my life, an arm, a finger for my picture. I've risked my life a lot of times while shooting. But I have a great pain, a great, great pain when I shoot that creature - I promised myself never any more to kill animals, because it was a mistake...

Why do you think that?

It was the same mistake the old religions made, to sacrifice animals to God - for me the picture was a religion. But later I changed, because I start to have children, I start to like life more. Now, if God came and told me to kill my children, I'd say 'You're crazy! I will never kill my son for you!' I prefer the life of my children to the whole damned God. So I said 'No more sacrifice to God.' I change. But I'm happy with my experience; I learned how to respect life. Also, I once cut down a tree for a film - I will never do that again!

Did you see the MONDO CANE cycle of documentary films in the sixties?

I like it! I love it! I think MONDO CANE was genius. The television steals from MONDO CANE now; every disaster, the TV cameras are there, filming bodies!

Back to SANTA SANGRE, it must have been difficult to conceal Blanca Guerra's arms in the scenes where your son Axel's arms were substituting for her 'missing' ones?

Yes, very difficult, every shot needed different angles, different positions to disguise them. But it works - Blanca and Axel were a good couple, because she held the sex of my son in her hands all the time - that's why they are doing so well! I approved the technique - it's not so moral, but it's like that! The incest thing worked well like that!

And the knife throwing?

I hired a real knife-thrower; the actresses were terrified, but they had to do it! He was the best in Mexico, this guy. Thelma ('The Tattooed Lady') was petrified... and I had to shoot the scene twice! (laughs).

Where was SANTA SANGRE shot?

In Mexico City, in some of the supposed 'dangerous' streets. You see prostitutes; they're real, that was the area we filmed. They say to me, "Don't go there, they'll kill you!" I said, "Let them try!" But I pay them, so they're happy I'm making a film in their street.

Do you like David Lynch's films?

Yes. I liked BLUE VELVET, ELEPHANT MAN was... very sweet, but ERASERHEAD...! This is the best, the best...

Would you like to work with Dennis Hopper?

I know him - on SANTA SANGRE, I called him and said 'Listen; I can give you \$50,000 for one week's shoot.' It's not bad, \$50,000, eh? It was not enough for him. I thought he was a friend, but not now, he's changed. I saw his film COLORS - ha! A film about how cops are beautiful!

And they're not - they're boring...

That's right! You know, one more picture about cops... I wanted him for the father in SANTA SANGRE, but \$50,000 was not enough. He was a big admirer of EL TOPO. When he shot that film of his, THE LAST MOVIE, I had to help him in the editing. He couldn't edit that movie. I worked two days without sleep on it because he had to show the picture to Hollywood. In two days, I finished it. It was impossible, really. It wasn't bad, what I did on that movie, but they changed it. I worked as a friend, to help him. To me that film was a magnificent piece, the idea about how films are changing the landscape, about how we're moving from reality to unreality. I saw VIDEODROME; fantastic! I like it. I think with the horror picture, I always say thus to interviewers, there is now the only possibility of freedom and poetry. HELLRAISER 1 and 2 for instance, in parts it is a masterpiece. EVIL DEAD 2 has such rhythm, it's all in the rhythm, incredible. You don't find that anywhere else in the industry. STREET TRASH - the destruction of the bodies is like Art, the modern painters like Pollock. In BRAIN DAMAGE, the young man pulling his brain out of his ear - that is one of the most poetical images I've found in the movies - these people are making the real New Cinema! I don't know if the critics think these are Art movies, but to me they are. I saw some of Dario Argento's films - OPERA I really liked. In fact, I loved the photography so much that I'm getting Ronnie Taylor, the cinematographer, for my next picture. OPERA was not such a commercial success - to me it is beautiful, an abstract film.

How much will SANTA SANGRE be cut in the States?

Idiocy! Things like the elephant's trunk ejecting blood! Complete idiocy! And the stabbing of the Tattooed Lady is nearly all gone! I laugh to myself about the 'great' crimes of Hitchcock - they are poor crimes, they are nothing to me! Television crimes! I wanted out of that. I wanted bad taste, a violent crime with the Mexican dancing music and more blood, more! A fantastic crime!!



Sex, Religion & Special Effects

Michele Soavi interviewed by Mark Ashworth

*Michele Soavi started out as an actor in movies by Lucio Fulci and Ruggero Deodato before working as Dario Argento's assistant on **TENEBRAE** and **PHENOMENA**. From directing the documentary **DARIO ARGENTO'S WORLD OF HORROR**, he made his feature directing debut with the skillful (if rather Argento-derivative) **STAGEFRIGHT**. Mark Ashworth talked to Soavi, then just 32, during a U.K. visit to accompany the screening of his original Italian language print of **LA CHIESA** at the Shock Around The Clock 3 film festival in 1989. He found him to be a thoughtful and very charming man whose self-effacing manner belied his growing stature as Italy's most accomplished new genre director.*

Visually, LA CHIESA seems to have been influenced by the work of artists like Bosch and Goya. Was this a conscious decision?

Of course, yes. I looked at the work of Bosch, the representations of Dante's *Inferno* by Dore. The painting that (Barbara) Cupisti is restoring is a real painting from San Germiniano. It's by a painter of the second century. I tried to give everything a realistic iconography because I wanted to make the film's imagery authentic.

Tell us something about the inception of the project.

Well, unfortunately, this film **LA CHIESA** collapsed in on my head, because first of all Lamberto Bava was going to do **DEMONS**; there was a script there, but then he had the chance to work as producer and director on a TV series. Dario, who as you know was producing, needed a director and he called me. We had only one month to change the script and build **LA CHIESA**. I'd never worked with this culture before, the evil things, the Gothic cathedral and all those things, so I read a lot of books in a very short time. On the other hand, it's not so hard, because it's all part of my cultural background as a European.

Catholic?

No... I'm not exactly a Catholic, I'm Christian... I don't go to church every Sunday. I mean, **STAGEFRIGHT** was perhaps more similar to my world because I was an actor, and describing the theatrical life and the actor's company is

more, you know, in my skin. The church is in my skin also, but as a tradition.

Parts of LA CHIESA reminded me of Pupi Avati's HOUSE WITH LAUGHING WINDOWS...

I've seen it once, I think. But there are a lot of films in there, a lot of things obviously that I like. You don't put things in that you don't like! So in **LA CHIESA**, there is this story of a man who discovers a pit under the church... here, I was dealing with the unknown, the Devil. It is very, very difficult to represent the Devil - if you see it, you're not scared of it anymore - it's a puppet, it's a special effect, and you lose a lot of tension. You know it's only a Sergio Stivaletti creation! The fantasy is much stronger when the audience can put in their own fears. But you have to accept this compromise because Dario Argento productions are always the type of films that need special effects. So I accept this, so as to do a bit of my film and a bit of Dario's film. It's like a sculpture, but maybe the first part works better than the second. Because you have perhaps too many characters and in the second half you lose the main characters; this is perhaps why the tension goes up and down. In **LA CHIESA**, I'm concerned with showing the conflict between the white and the black sides of the soul, and the struggle to keep the balance between them. It's a kind of karma, and when the pendulum goes on the black side all the fears the characters have in their lives materialise. That's what I'm trying to do -

sometimes it works, sometimes it's not understandable. I've tried to include something readable underneath the film, that has logic. Like the wedding thing - you know, it's a trap. **I found LA CHIESA very emotional and, in parts, very sexy...!**

Yeah? What kind of sexy?

Well, I mean - Argento's films are very structured, very beautiful, but very, very cold, the surface is very hard...

Yes, like ice...

...but your films, particularly LA CHIESA, have quite an organic feel. Even STAGEFRIGHT which is quite a clinical film...

It is very clean and compact.

...has quite a lot of sexual tension.

Yes - I acted for four years and I know what an actor is like inside, so I was trying to create a kind of dialogue with them. The problem is that many horror directors use actors like... just bodies. I'm not saying I'm a good director of actors, but I try to get actors to participate and give more of what they feel.

You've acted in some very strange films, such as Joe D'Amato's CALIGULA-THE UNTOLD STORY...

I was an actor in there... it was a very small job. Also, I was assistant director.

And you were also in Deodato's THE ATLANTIS INTERCEPTORS - did you work as assistant director on many other films?

Not really. What happened often, was like in Fulci's **CITY OF THE LIVING DEAD**, which they shot in the USA in 1980. I was there for fifteen days, but I only had acting work for five, so for the other days I was very bored. I was very interested in working with the crew, so I asked Fulci and was allowed to help with the grip - this was my first experience of this double role of actor and crew-member. **THE ATLANTIS INTERCEPTORS** was the same. I went to the Philippines for three weeks but only acted for ten days. Ruggero is a friend of mine, so I just helped out for free. After that, my career as an assistant director grew, but my acting dropped off. I can always choose myself now, of course!

How did you enjoy working on Terry Gilliam's ADVENTURES OF BARON MUNCHAUSEN?

Well, I really like **BRAZIL**, I find it extraordinary, very violent and dramatic - and also very scary, even though it's not a horror film. It's about the horror of your self and the world you live in, the social mechanism, the machine, and about alienation. **BARON MUNCHAUSEN** was quite an

experience, because I'd never worked on a film with a budget like that before. I did a lot of things for Terry Gilliam - it's difficult making scenes for another director, and many nights I couldn't sleep for wondering if they would be what he wanted. Working with such a huge budget makes you more distant from the actual film, and doing a simple scene that would normally take five minutes takes years! I think it's better to have a low budget and compact story.

What are your plans for your next work?

My next film will be another Dario Argento production, I've signed a contract to do another one. I have more time now to see to the next story, which I want to be very solid - horrific, shocking and very dramatic. But always with realism - I believe you can be visionary within a realistic situation and not have to fall back on special effects. Italian movies, I think it's fair to say, couldn't care less about the script, and now they're following the American system, like sheep. The Americans do special effects with millions of dollars, and in Italy they want to do the same with, like, 5000 lira! I think this is one of the very bad things about movies now. Italian movies have a very good tradition of making simple scenes into artistic scenes. You can make many, many effects which aren't just muppets, interesting visual effects. Nowadays, it's like 'Sergio Stivaletti is there, he's not working, so let's build some muppets for the movie', even though they're not in the script!

The cogs and wheels beneath the church, for example, are far more stunning than the monsters...

The mechanism, yeah, and also one scene I really like is where the huge cross collapses and sets everything in motion. In the original script, after that scene, when Thomas Arana got possessed, *he* becomes a monster but I chose to find him the morning after looking completely normal instead.

Another impressive shot comes near the end - the long, slow tracking shot through the vault. I thought that was wonderful.

Really? ! The simple things are always the best. It's like the shot near the beginning which starts in the Middle Ages but finishes in our time. It was done in three separate shots, with the momentary black-outs masking the cuts.

Your use of things like long dolly and tracking shots reminded me a lot of 60's horrors like Margheriti's LONG HAIR OF DEATH The only thing missing was the zooms. I hate zooms! To over-use the zoom is horrible - the film becomes shit. You should only have one or two in a film; slow ones like tracking shots, perhaps.



Do you feel that if you simply cut to shot, the film becomes more anonymous, more Americanized?

You're right. Moving the camera a lot creates problems with things like lighting, but it's worth it. I don't like 'video clip'-style editing, I like long shots that create tension. I hate TV as well. If Cronenberg hadn't had the idea to make a film about television, I would have liked to have done it - it was a very ancient idea I had.

Did you do much research for the witchcraft angle?

Yes, it was very useful to do so. I looked into the supersti-

tion surrounding it. LA CHIESA starts with superstition - you have these Teutonic Knights who are slaves of the church, they see demons everywhere, witches in everybody. So they go into this little village and massacre everybody just because of some stupid priest! When I was shooting, I was thinking of him as the Devil, the priest was the real Devil. So the knights misunderstood everything. In the original script, the Teutonic Knights were positive, and all the people in the village were villains, all *raaarrrgh!* (pulls twisted expression). I found that very, very stupid. So I made the 'witch' very young and pretty - I mean, she could be a witch, but she's not, but they think she is. They kill everybody, you know, like the SS.

How do you feel about the ending? I found it confusing...

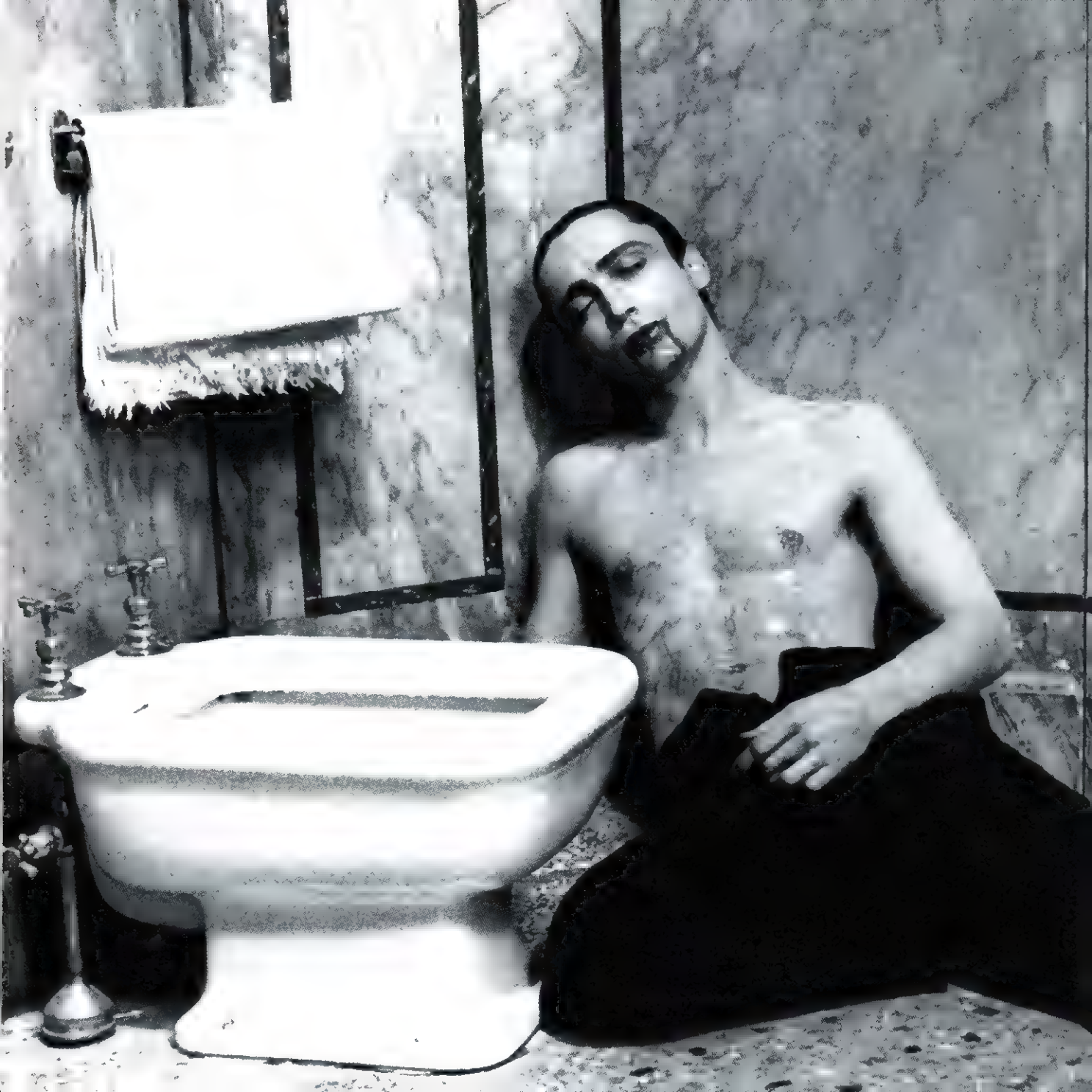
It is! Maybe I shouldn't say this, but when we shot the film we didn't know how to end it. The church collapses, but we had to have something else for the end, another surprise. We found a ruined church in Hamburg which matched ours, for the scenes showing it surrounded by offices and busy roads...at the end of it all, she has a vision which is like our world reversed, when she finds the stone-carved face that covered the hole. In fact the idea I had for the next film is connected to that - it's all about holes.

Apart from the confusing ending though, I loved LA CHIESA very much indeed. I thought you captured the heavy, oppressive atmosphere of the ritual aspect of religion very accurately...

Yeah - I cut a lot of scenes like that from LA CHIESA, though. The film was maybe 15 or 20 minutes longer - we screened it for Dario and he said "Boring", and we took it out. (note: the version screened at the Shock Around the Clock festival contained several scenes deleted from the 'official' version). But anyway, I think in the end there was a good compromise between me and him.

How do you feel about LA CHIESA being promoted as a Dario Argento film?

I am a bit angry - in Italy the poster says "Dario Argento presents LA CHIESA", then there are the names of the actors and "directed by Michele Soavi" in tiny print. Obviously, I am not happy about that. Dario is a director himself though, and obviously I had to accept some compromise. I was after all working from his brief. I don't want to do "Dario Argento Productions" for the rest of my life, but anyway, he told me next time I'll have more freedom. So, maybe next time I'll be able to do more of what I want.



Inter/VIEW with Paul Morrissey

by Stephen Thrower

"It is useful to remember the difference between a moralist and one who moralises." - Wyndham Lewis.

This interview was conducted by telephone to Morrissey's New York apartment, but the potentially deadening effect of the 'phone was easily transcended by his rapid-fire delivery and dry wit. Morrissey is a one-off whose manner shows that it can often be more fun to encounter an individual with antagonistic ideas than to shoot the breeze with those we already agree with. His mordant views on drug culture, Warhol and the portrayal of sex in the movies are expressed here through his regular persona of the sharp-witted, irascible conservative. What distinguishes him from the usual strain of socio-cultural reactionary is the absence of pompous and oppressive injunctions to change. His values may be conservative but his temperament and artistic discourse is profoundly liberal. Rather than hectoring his audience on moral issues he allows inconsistencies in libertarian positions to effectively burlesque themselves. Rather than insist on the censorship of cultural forms he disagrees with, he challenges the easy identification with liberal 'freedoms' that has inspired their expression. It is Morrissey's strong and essentially humane sense of humour that makes all the difference. No matter how caustic the satire of characters' lifestyles or pretensions, we are always aware of a pervading interest and concern for the people he depicts. This, combined with a willingness to experiment with form (in furtherance of rather than denial of empathy), make him one of America's most talented and under-rated film-makers.

Did you have a prior interest in horror films that led you to choose Dracula and Frankenstein for your experiments in genre?

No, that was more Andrew Braunsberg asking me, I thought about it... it never dawned on me, I'd never wanted to do such a thing. But the 3-D on FRANKENSTEIN, the idea I could make it in Europe with European actors - that appealed to me, so that's why I did it.

I knew you were interested in English comedy, I wondered whether you'd had an interest in the Hammer studio as well...

I thought they were awfully poor movies, all the Hammer films. Christopher Lee was a very poor choice for Dracula. I was around then and they were looked upon as just junk, it was just that they were the first horror films in colour. They were not even shown here in New York on first run, very often. But because Hammer had done so many of them, I immediately thought they (the producers) were putting me in a category with that kind of film.

Well, they are very different...

Yeah, they very much are! As soon as I realised that I'd be doing it all by myself, I realised I'd only be in my own category,

Are you aware that - and I know you've been through this so many times before with the Andy Warhol question, but - there is a critical cabal that says your FRANKENSTEIN and DRACULA pictures are actually directed by an Italian director, Antonio Margheriti?

It's from some incompetent idiot who puts out one of those horror encyclopaedias, isn't it?

Yes. The entries are dreadful as well - have you read them?
No I didn't, but someone had told me where they come from. Do you want to hear the whole story?

Yes... was Margheriti someone who helped throughout the filming at all? Did he have a creative position of any kind?

Yes, he had a very tiny role and it was a kind of scheme on the part of (Carlo Ponti) the producer, unbeknownst to me at the time really, to obtain Italian nationality and therefore a state subsidy for the films from the box office, so it was eligible as an Italian film even with an American director.

When I finished the first film, **FLESH FOR FRANKENSTEIN**, I wanted to do **BLOOD FOR DRACULA** in 3-D as well, but the cameraman thought it wasn't advisable because we weren't going to be in the Cinecittà soundstage, and he had only one lens. He said 'We're gonna be in a house' - a palace or a little villa or something - 'and I feel awkward working with this one lens - we've got no variation so maybe we shouldn't use the 3-D'. So I agreed with what he said and...I had these left-over bats which were meant for the Dracula movie in 3-D, this wonderful effect which I hadn't used in the Frankenstein movie. So the production manager [Mara Blasetti] said 'Why don't we use them in the 3-D movie?' - which I'd just finished - You know, the idea of someone helping me make a movie is pathetic - just ask anyone who was in the movies, I make it up each day as I go along and then I type it up in the morning and the idea of somebody around helping me is really idiotic.

He [Margheriti] worked for Ponti on salary, he'd made hundreds of films, for everybody, for Ponti, he'd made so many. You know, they take him there and - we're in a different place now, not in Cinecittà - she said, you know we should really use those great bats in the 3-D film and I said 'You're right, but now that we're not in the Cinecittà set...'. She said, 'Well we have to take the set down at the end of this week, why don't we let this Mr Margheriti' - she introduced me to him - 'just go back and shoot something with the bats so they can go in the 3-D movie' and I said O.K. well, he can use the children; and the children didn't speak a word of English. Then the editor - we weren't sure if it was going to run to 90 minutes - said 'Why not add some sort of title sequence?'. So I said that's a good idea - the children go round the lab and look - at the guts and so on - so he came in and did a second unit of the titles and the bats, with the children. He never directed an actor, he never - I saw an interview where they said he helped with the story, with the actors - directing them - he's obviously, erm - an idiot. I mean, I thought he was just a nice sort of Italian man, but he turned out to be...I guess those are the only two films anybody ever heard of where his name was connected.

Well, he's made lots of films, the thing is he made a few good horror films in the sixties, and now there's a modest amount of critical favour for them. But really, they're quite obscure. There is a cult for his Gothic films...

Nobody's ever heard of them, I've never heard of them! And he did hundreds of movies. I didn't see them, I never saw a

film by him. But I did see him trying to claim some credit for the Frankenstein/Dracula films... that's really dishonest.

To me, your movies have a special brand of irony that's just not present in any of his movies at all, so it did seem unlikely...

There are elements in my movies that don't exist in any movies by anybody! (laughs) In fact nothing in my movies seems to be similar to other people's movies! When I watch them again it always surprises me just how different they are. But you know, in an interview with some idiot little magazine here in the United States, they called me up and asked me a few questions, not about him, about the film and then ran my little piece, about a page, as if I was acquiescing with his idiot perception. It was rather a treacherous kind of stupid thing they did, a real crooked thing they did. In his [Margheriti's] little...recollection of his great work on these two films, how important he was to them, he said 'Oh, I got so much fun with that little guy Udo, I wonder what happened to him?' Well, he worked in one little sequence with Udo's assistant named Arno, but Udo was six feet! He never even met Udo or if he did it was when he came on the set one day when I had to meet him. He didn't direct one line of dialogue, he had not one second unit shot in Dracula, and he did a title sequence and a bat sequence and one little sequence with Arno and he thought Arno was the star! Anyway, you just have to take into account what kind of a moron wrote that article originally.

I can understand you being pissed off, considering how long it took for your 'Andy Warhol Presents' movies to be recognised as your work rather than his.

Well, you know, it just never dawned on me that people would be so foolish and stupid - it says 'Andy Warhol presents' - written photographed and directed by somebody else. How they could keep calling them 'Andy Warhols' when he's saying 'Presents'...That's the way **FLESH, TRASH** and **HEAT** and others were presented. And Andy was not a director, he never directed anything in his whole life, and the notion that he was participating in his movies - it's just something people wanna believe because of the celebrity name.

You must get sick of reading ex-Factory people's reminiscences claiming that you 'ruined Andy's films'.

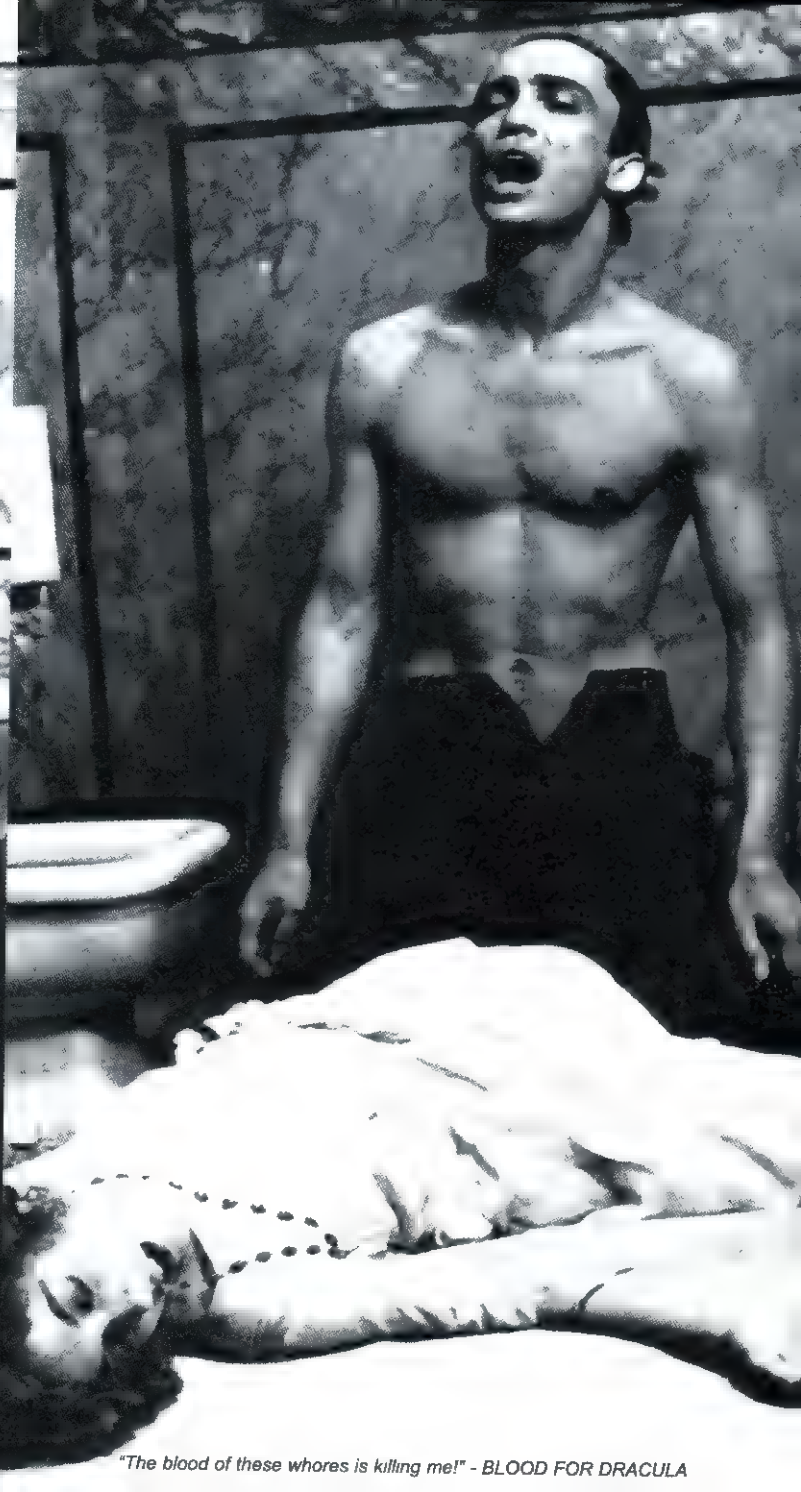
They were all on drugs, so their memories...and nobody was around much, you know - all these people who came once, or not for months, or came up for ten minutes and went away and saw Andy at a party, they imagined they were

How the *the* seas
BLOOD *the* *the*





rare promotional shot of Joe Dallesandro and Ugo Kio



"The blood of these whores is killing me!" - BLOOD FOR DRACULA

part of some group - there was no group, there was no 'hippy commune' - it was an office. I always ran the office and usually these drug people were people I was, you know, phasing out of even being in the movies. I purposely moved away from using anyone who was - hanging around and taking drugs and started using people who were not part of the scene. They all had a kind of grudge because I didn't use them and I just didn't really feel right using people who showed up all drugged up because they thought the drugs were gonna help them in their performance.

But when you portrayed people in *Trash*, say, or *Mixed Blood* even, who were 'under the influence', you did what? Encourage the performers to draw on recollections, or to make it up entirely?

I never would suggest any of those things. I made sure the people I was using were not taking any drugs and that was it. I never asked them to go back to recollections, I said 'Act like you're taking...I asked them to act! Act! It's called acting! (laughs). Like you're taking drugs. Any fool can make up that junk. No-one was taking drugs at The Factory, the office, when I was running it - if they were I told them to go. Nobody wanted drug addicts around. They came and went, and then they went and took drugs and they messed up their lives with drugs, and the notion is that these people came there to take their drugs or were being encouraged to take their drugs. They were - I don't want to say shunned - but, sort of, you know, overlooked for any kind of roles because they were taking drugs. The only movie I've made about drugs really is **TRASH**. It's hardly a kind of, pro-drug, you know, 'gee, let's leave these people alone to have their little drug culture' sort of film, it was showing how sad and rather pathetic people who believed in that thing were becoming.

Well, I've read a few things you've said on this, that were kind of hostile to people who get involved in that lifestyle, but at the same time TRASH is really... quite compassionate, would you accept that word?

(laughs) Of course I would, you never make a movie about people you don't like. They're people - you don't dislike the people if you're trying to make a good movie. The lifestyle is made fun of. The people in all my movies I hope are sympathetic otherwise the movie's no good.

The films that are more clearly Warhol's, the earlier ones, are often pretty cold and unsympathetic to the performers, and yet your films are very different. Is that part of the

reason why some people have 'talked down' your early films; because you were interrupting their 'cool' by introducing an emotional element that wasn't there before?

I think the reason I got a bad press is mainly because of people who weren't in the movies. And then there was another little group of art groupies who imagined all this stuff was great art. And they thought the 'great art' was over because I was making real movies. They don't understand anything that was going on, that's all there is to it.

That's the attitude of Stephen Koch's book - 'Stargazer' ...

Oh, that! That's real garbage! That's by one of those dopey art groupies. To imagine that Andy had concepts, and aesthetics, you know, and 'artistic' notions is, you know...really funny. The movies seem a little cold because they were, when I came. Nobody wants to say what was going on, they imagine that Andy was this sort of locomotive doing all these things - he did, in fact, almost nothing. He wanted things to happen and he had to have somebody make them happen for him. Though when he asked me to help him make movies he was in effect asking me to help him make experiments and I was the only one who had any respect for these experiments that actually would take time, and spend time and stay there and make them, and try to improve them. And the coldness of a lot of the early ones is that they are experiments and they have very little direction. But if anybody paid attention to the progress of them, you'd see that direction enters, with stories and combinations of people that create conflicts, and those are directions that are put in there - but they're not 100% directed, they're left partially directed and partially undirected...then, they become totally directed. Andy's contribution was not to direct...

So he gradually withdrew entirely...

Yes, I mean, I don't know how people wanna put a positive spin on something that was basically negative - if you don't direct, they call that some kind of direction. Now I found something interesting was happening with the performers, and like you were asking earlier, I found that you have to understand performers, give them very little if anything to go on, just who they are and what they should be doing, vaguely, and leave it up to them and that repays the best dividends. People were not being asked to play Richard the Third here! They were playing to friends of theirs, you know.

You were making films before you even met Warhol, weren't you? Did your initial relationship with him

revolve around a mutual interest in films, or did he not engage in even that sort of conversation?

He had seen the films that I was showing at this little one-night stand theatre - on Monday nights they showed people who'd made their own movies, and he'd brought one of the things he'd made, and I'd brought two or three short things I'd made and he said - he was very childlike and innocent, he wasn't faking it - 'Gee, your films are in focus! Good! Mine are never in focus, the guy who's helping me doesn't know how to focus, and the sound I'm using now is no good', and then 'Why don't you come and help me, cos the other guy I'm using is always bunking off' - so I went up and I helped him, I made the lighting and I focussed and I did this and that, and I kept, you know, inserting myself more and more. But I did it gradually because I respected his wish to experiment. But he himself could not physically, was not capable of making his own experiments, someone else had to make his experiments for him. He wanted them to be experiments. To keep Andy involved with the experiment, he operated the camera. He operated the camera on **LONESOME COWBOYS** and **BIKE BOY** and things like that. At that point I was telling him to stop. move in now, we'll go here, so here he was just taking - I wouldn't call them orders, more like suggestions. But even just operating the camera, and letting it go further than I would have liked it to go, was not to my mind satisfactory. So finally I just took the camera and went off by myself, with one person, Jed Johnson, running the sound, the Nagra tape recorder and made **FLESH**, and it became much more satisfactory!

A little bit like the patronage enjoyed by Renaissance painters, then?

Well, sure I saw it as a nice opportunity to function, and do film and look at it and see what to make of it. He wasn't very rich, and he didn't spend any money and he was a penny pincher, but that was alright with me because I'm a bit of a penny pincher myself, but I respected his attitude, he was very responsible, he never wasted money, he didn't go into debt, he paid his bills, he picked up cheques, he was a likeable person. As I progressed through these experiments after about the third year I realised - and he realised too - that there was nowhere else to go, and that they had to become like, real movies, and he had no problems with that whatsoever. People like to imagine this was a great defeat for him, but he understood better than anybody the dead end - he had gone as far as he could go, and I had taken him there. But when I did those later films all by myself 100%,

with just one other person, he only saw them when they were finished. He was very happy, but at the same time, to him, my real job was to make him more famous and nothing made him more famous than him presenting these films. So I was spoiled in the sense that I had somebody who said, 'you make the movie and that's great' and there was no interference...

...But there was a mutual benefit, because he was getting the kind of public profile he wanted but couldn't quite bring himself to make the movies to obtain.

Absolutely! The most beneficial thing that ever happened to him was that these movies were watched and went all over the world.

Something that interested me in Maurice Yacowar's book...

A good book, I felt...he actually bothered to ask me what was going on and I tried to make some sense out of it all, and he understood. But most of these people who write these books don't ever, none of them in fact, even came and said, what is your version of what was going on - they write all this crap without even talking to me.

I suppose they feel that they should be left to do what they want to do as well...but it helps if there's a little intercourse there.

They have their little agenda and - let them have it, who cares? But I said to Maurice Yacowar, you know I think you can see if you look closely that every movie I've made is the same movie, in a kind of different way.

Well that's one of the accepted 'marks of the auteur' isn't it? That's the theory...

Well...if you make a film entirely by yourself, it should have some reference to yourself.

In reference to the Yacowar book, he suggests something interesting about **BLOOD FOR DRACULA; Esmerelda, the chaste older daughter who eventually decides to have a tryst with Count Dracula, consummates her passion with him off-camera. He says that it implies you consider their union "too pure and personal". This sounds like a Catholic perception. Is it true, and if so does that mean that the other performers who do have sex on camera are in some way degraded by it?**

I would agree with that! I think that any kind of sex on-camera is totally degrading. Every movie I've had it in was to show the characters to be making fools of themselves. The most pointless activity in their lives is this crap about 'Oh, you've got to give me good sex, and here it is', and then they

photograph it. To me it's the hallmark of an idiot director who uses a sex scene at all for any kind of story-line that isn't rather - pathetic for the characters. But basically I think that after the initial appearance of sex, when it reared its ugly head in the middle, late sixties, it's obligatory now in every kind of child television show, and sit-com and soap opera. Sex is simply another function like going to the toilet, and I think in this life we have nowadays, which is so cheap and debased, it's just another form of showing people on the toilet. And I notice more and more movies are actually showing people on the toilet, wiping their ass and all that, I understand there was a film with Jessica Lange recently where she had to go to the toilet and wipe herself in some Liam Neeson movie! (laughs) Something called **ROB ROY**? I didn't see it, somebody told me that! I just think that the emphasis put on it by people who make films is rather pathetic. I like that observation he made, and in a way subconsciously I think I was doing that. Because Dracula for me is a very sympathetic character...and he's a wonderful actor, Udo Kier, he just loves to act and he has such a strong personality, and he was so good in **FRANKENSTEIN**; and then in **DRACULA** I told him 'Now your little assistant who you've mistreated will mistreat you!' And it worked perfectly. You can't have a horror film unless you have good horror characters, and they think they can hire some idiot actor, what was that awful crap they just did? With Kenneth Branagh...

What, Branagh's FRANKENSTEIN? Well, your version pisses over that!

Thank God! This is garbage, and here they are thinking 'We're such good actors'. Now he's a very good actor Kenneth Branagh, but the only good thing he ever did was for television, called *The Fortunes of War*. Anyway, you can't just take 'good actors' and put them in horror movies, you need special personalities that are appropriate to the horror genre. You hardly ever see that in any horror now...

Well, BLOOD FOR DRACULA in particular hasn't got a single bad performance, I don't think, however small the parts are. The obvious example is Roman Polanski, who is only in one scene but he's astonishing in it. How did that come about?

Well, he was the one who instigated offering me to make those movies, because he was sort of in business with Carlo Ponti at the time, making a movie called **WHAT?** And he suggested to Andrew Braunsberg and Carlo Ponti that they make a 3-D Frankenstein with me. Then, when I was

making **BLOOD FOR DRACULA** he said 'How's it going?', and I said 'Well, I have a problem - my star, Udo, has to go for one day's work, in Switzerland or somewhere, he had to fly out of town, but, you know, he's in every scene!'. So Polanski said 'Why don't you let me do a scene?' I said, 'Oh, that's a good idea!' He just came and, he devised that scene. Somebody told me he did that same scene, with the game, in a recent movie of his called **BITTER MOON**...

Right, there's a similar scene in there - have you not seen that film?

No, I hear it's good though

It's brilliant, it's very nasty! (laughs). There's an S&M sex scene that's played as grotesque, ridiculous, someone imitating a pig etc. I think you might be amused...

Very mean, I heard, yeah? But very interesting. I'll see it on home video one of these days. I like Roman Polanski a lot, I think he's a really good man who's made some wonderful movies. His best movies are his early horror movies, and things like **THE TENANT** where he can work with who he wants to work with. Now he always has to work with big names, who have some currency on the video shelf, or some such crap, and I think that's a problem for a creative person like him. All really creative people nowadays - not in the thirties and forties when there was a studio system and a different way of making movies - but now, they have to assume all the responsibility for the movie. The only two who do it in America are John Hughes, who stopped after **HOME ALONE** because I guess he became so rich he doesn't care anymore. But all of his films he cast, he wrote, he directed, and he produced out of Chicago, he had nothing to do with California, he didn't let them interfere, he did it his own way. He was the only independent we had in America, and he got no attention, because his films are humorous and they're about teenagers...

What did you think of Larry Clarke's film, KIDS?

I really hated it, I really couldn't stay. I saw only a bit of it, I found it so phony. I mean, to take kids and make them so phony and artificial - kids don't talk like that. That was a phony way of talking and a phony way of being dirty. Kids' problems are disgusting enough now, but to make them that disgusting and in a phony, artificial way...

Do you think maybe they were playing up to it deliberately, and in a way...

Absolutely! They were told to say that garbage, and they were told to go even further, and here they were masturbating in front of the camera, because they were asked to - I

don't know, I only saw about a half-hour of the movie - they were going further than they were even asked to go just to be cute, and to be naughty, and it became so distasteful and so dishonest. I felt very, er, disgusted. I think basically, a person like that hates human beings, and people like that shouldn't make films, unless they really like the characters who are in front of their camera. Or else why bother? Why not just take a camera and go photograph traffic.

Did you like the John Waters films? Because he seems to have a very similar attitude to yours, and he turned up at a Factory party once, with, was it Edith Massey?

Yes, absolutely, I think he's wonderful. I forgot to mention him, he's a wonderful independent. But he had a terrible loss when he lost Divine, Divine was really the foundation of his whole kind of world, but he's done good work since then, I liked the recent film, but... I wanted to see Divine in the role, not Kathleen Turner. I think people who take themselves seriously, especially now, are not good directors. He's great though. I remember putting him in 'Interview' when I was running it, and paying attention to him when he was circulating with his little home movies. But there was no 'Factory' Factory at that time, there was no group. I was Andy's manager, I managed all of his affairs for about an eight year period, then I went away and someone else came in, and all they managed was to collect all the money from the rich people who wanted their portraits done, and the reason they wanted their portraits done was because Andy's name had become so famous from the movies. So many people now think the Factory was like, you know, The Playboy Club I guess. It was certainly nothing of the kind, it was a very boring office, I'd be there and answer the phone all day and I tried to scout up business that would make some money off Andy, and commercialise Andy. It turned out the best way it could be done was to make movies that went into theatres and he presented them and his name got famous, and people would then say 'Oh, I'll buy the art because his name is more famous than it ever was', and then he just collected money after I left, until he died, from the polaroid art. I was never interested in the art part, so I was glad to get away at that point.

What do you think about the explosion of home-produced pornography in America?

I read an article in the New Yorker about it. It's just extraordinary how far it's gone, and how sick it is, and how unhappy these people are. All the things I was talking about twenty-five years ago have kind of come home to

roost in a huge way, large numbers of people get involved in it.

Whereas people might once have gone to, say, your early films to gawk at the sexual antics of the counter-culture, now they're reproducing their own in the comfort of their own condo's...

Well - they're not recreating what I was doing, because again I think I was telling sympathetic stories about people caught in the mess of contemporary garbage life. But the sex movies are a lot like the sex in commercial movies now, just arbitrary and obligatory, and it has no connection with anything meaningful. That article, a long article, went on and on about how these people are all so miserable and unhappy and committing suicide, and what a terrible dead end it is and they take it very seriously.

Do you think any film-maker has managed to present explicit sex in a way where you felt there was something valuable in its being shown?

No, no. Because to do that they have to pretend that the sex they're photographing is real, so right away they're being phony, by pretending this is real. Unless you keep the audience aware that it is a movie, that this is only theatre, unreal, and you go by certain conventions - or you're just wasting time really. Now, I stepped outside of the conventions, and I showed it because it was something new then. And at the time it was just happening in other places around the world, say, it wasn't happening in American movies then. I immediately saw it as something idiotic and something you could make fun of. So I was there burlesquing it really.

Maurice Braddell, the old guy who's photographing Joe in FLESH has a very interesting speech about body worship.

He acted in THINGS TO COME, I knew he'd been an actor in the twenties and thirties, then he became a playwright, then he became a monk, then a painting restorer, and he lived in New York for thirty years on the welfare - went back to England and died six, seven, eight years ago. He made that speech up himself, but when I heard it I thought, well it makes good sense, I liked it.

Would you substitute that for a concentration on sex as such?

Well, it's somebody else's idea of what it all might be about, but I thought it was good, I'm sympathetic to alternatives to that crap you get out the magazines and newspapers! You know, the movie is about flesh. It's actually about people who have a certain kind of flesh, and other people who



want that kind of flesh. And then there's a woman who wants her breasts enlarged, and another guy talking about scars he got in the war, another wants to cut out flesh in an abortion, kill the baby. People desiring flesh, punishing flesh. For me it's a very metaphorical movie. I always loved the title.

It's the film's sole means of exchange...

In the modern world it is, yeah, but it once was something else and that guy brings up allusions to the past. Joe appears like something from the past, he doesn't look like one of these little gutter Italians. Nature's endowed him with a kind of statuesque appearance like they used to make art about. He was 18 and a half then. Now he's in all the Calvin Klein ads this month, looking as good as ever. I see him on the billboards, he's in this big campaign for Calvin Klein. But my reference there was to an earlier period when people like that would have been more interesting to people on a better level than they are now. Now they're just a pound of flesh.

So you'd be comfortable if someone thought Maurice Braddell's dialogue was a directorial comment?

Yes! Yes, I would say I found that when I allowed the actors to improvise, which I did on **FLESH**, **TRASH** and **HEAT**, and on two other films, one called **L'AMOUR** and

another called **WOMEN IN REVOLT** - which is coming out again in January in New York - anyway, the dialogue they came back with was just amazing, there were no other films where this dialogue occurs, it was a special circumstance which in some weird way I was able to get. I wouldn't have got it if I hadn't experimented, maybe, for years with Andy's 'undirected' movies, but during the period I was directing - any good director directs by indirection. Bad directors all, you know, wanna hit the nail right on the head. They study, they do their homework and they come with the wonderful suggestion and they tell the actors some stupid idea that just inhibits them. You work with the actors, almost tricking it out of them, in some weird way. Holly Woodlawn in **TRASH** was especially good.

Finally, what did you think of your long-time assistant's 'Andy Warhol film', Jed Johnson's **BAD ?**

It's wonderful. Jed was the person who ran my tape recorder. It's a wonderful movie. You should write about it. Jed's the biggest interior decorator in New York, he employs about sixty people, he works day and night, he's a workaholic. But only for the richest people, he's as rich as could be. He's a very nice person - I discovered him and made him my assistant. That film was written for me, and the Perry King part was written for Joe, and I was doing something else at the time, and I suggested Jed do it, and then - it was supposed to be a low budget movie and it turned out to be a very expensive movie. But the film didn't do any business anywhere. I felt it was an imitation of things I had done. You know somebody else wrote it, though? He had very good sense in getting it made, he did a good job. I thought that Perry King was a very good actor, but not sympathetic, and Joe - well, people say that Perry King was a better actor than Joe, but I don't know, because Joe would have somehow made that character sympathetic. There was no sympathetic person at the centre, it was all a bit too mean. Joe would have made it something else, and it showed me how crucial it is to cast someone who is likeable. Not that Perry King is unlikeable, but he's more of a character actor, so he really wasn't perfect in that part. I think it's a very interesting film but it's hard to evaluate unless you connect it to all the movies I made before because it was a kind of...

A Morrissey film that should have been?

(laughs) Well, should have been perhaps, but I still think what it is is very unusual and exceptional and certainly very entertaining. Jed did a wonderful job.



the joys of human sacrifice. TO THE DEVIL... A DAUGHTER

Witches, Hippies & the Devil's DNA

Christopher Wicking interviewed by Max Décharné

*Born in 1943, Chris Wicking's writing credits begin in 1969 with Gordon Hessler's **THE OBLONG BOX**. His subsequent work took the British horror genre further than many earlier, more critically lauded Hammer films, particularly **DEMONS OF THE MIND**, a haunting, lyrical film whose darkness is all the more sinister for being so subtle and low key. Max Décharné spoke to him in 1989 about his career and his thoughts on the films as realised on screen - the interview was first printed in *Eyeball* #5 in 1998.*

Before SCREAM AND SCREAM AGAIN you'd already worked with Gordon Hessler for AIP doing additional dialogue on THE OBLONG BOX.

Yes, that's what my credit was. Gordon and I were a team. In **SCREAM AND SCREAM AGAIN** I remember there's a scene where the police find a body on the common and I said 'wouldn't it be great if that was all done in one take', and he said yes, so the whole thing is shot in one long tracking shot. It definitely didn't say that in the script, it was Gordon Hessler and I talking.

Scriptwriters wouldn't always have that kind of input.

No. Certainly. We were not on that level, we were some other level. He was directing - I don't mean he was directing what I was writing, that sounds wrong - but what I mean is I didn't have to say 'oh he's done it all wrong' because we were thinking the same way. Also he came up with wonderful things I never would have thought of.

SCREAM AND SCREAM AGAIN hasn't exactly got a conventional 'happy ending', has it?

I think in an odd sort of way we were trying to make a kind of warning movie. There was a sort of subversion we were trying to suggest existed. We were saying alright, it might be the swinging sixties, it might be this, that and the other but wait a minute, the institutions are still in control. There isn't anybody in that picture who is trying to break out of anything. You've got a whole series of institutional figures who in a sense are at war with each other, just because their systems are different.

As the anarchists say, 'If voting changed anything they'd make it illegal'.

Well Vincent Price is the character who says that, and they say 'yes you're absolutely right' and then wham, they kill him. Vincent is the only person in that picture who thinks he's doing the right thing. He is the individualist. He's invented the whole idea of the humanoids or whatever they are. He is the hero of the story, although he starts out as the villain, or you think he's the villain, so in that sense there are no other characters. Well, there's the detective, the policeman character, he's interesting, but there aren't really any characters in that film at all.

There's people you feel sorry for just because they're caught up in things...Yutte Stensgaard having her fingers chopped off with pliers. People do have a habit of losing their hands in your movies. Does that symbolise anything to you?

Well it's like being branded. There was a thing in medieval times where they couldn't afford to put you in prison, because everybody was needed in society, so if you were a thief they would first brand a 'T' on your head, so people could see you coming - 'This is a thief'. You're young, we'll take a chance on you. Then you steal more, now, they would not cut off the hand that you used, if you were right-handed they would cut off the left hand, because society still needed your labour. That's what fascinates me. Actually the best bad review I ever had was from Penelope Mortimer, who was John Mortimer's wife. She was a film reviewer when

SCREAM AND SCREAM AGAIN came out. 'It's appalling' she said 'Where was the moral censor?' I think that was her phrase. Now that only made sense if you knew she'd been in hospital after a road accident and she'd just got out having had all sorts of operations. So the first movie she then sees was this one where people get taken to hospital and they wake up and find their legs have been amputated (laughs). But she was right because she was supposed to be upset about this picture. **DEMONS OF THE MIND** for instance actually touches nerves because it doesn't cosmeticise things. It makes you think 'Oh God, that's awful', and I think if you're going to have horror pictures, somehow you should be made to be uneasy.

It's about the only genre that can do that - if some scenes were in a mainstream film you wouldn't get them past the censors.

Yes. Also films should somehow be about something... on **CRY OF THE BANSHEE** for example we tried to take something that we could relate to and we took Mayor Daley and the 1968 Siege Of Chicago. Witches, in our mind, were the hippies and Vincent Price was Mayor Daley. At that time in the late sixties and early seventies there was a whole collision between the new freedoms and this repression, and that seemed to be what the story was about. Sure it was witches and Vincent and all the rest of it, but that was what we thought it was about.

Do you think people picked up on that?

I have no idea, because that was re-edited in America. I don't think I've actually seen that version, because we had a screening of the version that we made here. Gordon Hessler and I had become like a little team for AIP and they said this is your next project. I was reading all sorts of true accounts of the time and there's an extraordinary letter that a prisoner wrote to his daughter. They'd pulled his fingernails out and he's saying 'I am writing in extreme pain because...' and they're trying to make him confess. I never realised before doing research for this picture that people genuinely believed in 1600-and-whatever that there was a God, that there was a soul and a spirit, and if you in some way had sold your soul to the Devil you would not go to heaven. Therefore they had to make you confess, then you would go to heaven. They tortured you because they wanted you to go to heaven. That's some weird, warped thinking. One of my favourite scenes of things I've written is a scene where Vincent Price has been torturing this woman, not because he particularly believes in witchcraft, just because that's what

you do - because he wants to put down the hippies, basically. Now however he realises there is a banshee out there, and he is in danger, so he rushes to the only person he's got, this witch down in the torture chamber. He knows she genuinely can work wonders, so to speak, and wants her to tell him the truth but she's cracked because they've been ripping her to pieces and she says 'At night I flew with Satan' - which of course is madness. He's saying 'No, tell me..' but she's just giving him what he wanted to hear in the last reel, and it's too late now. I think it's a wonderful scene because they're completely at odds with each other. Vincent was great and Pamela Farbrother who played the other part was fantastic. That came out of research, this concept of what people believed. I tried to put those things into it and yet still tell the story that AIP wanted to have, and it became interesting. In my mind it was a Jacobean tit-for-tat thing. Gordon wanted to have Bernard Herrmann to do the score for it because they'd known each other from the Hitchcock days. Bernie looked at it and said 'Gordon, what you've got here is a Jacobean revenge picture' and I'd never told anybody, because you see they'd have fired you. It was a seventy, eighty minute movie and he said 'You need 64 minutes of music', and we had this editor who'd cut **THE THIRD MAN**, a guy called Ossie Hafenrichter, who was Seth Holt's editor too, and to him film was pure editing - you shouldn't have any music anyway, because the music was in the cuts - and Bernie Herrmann says 'We have to have music'. So Ossie walked out, they had to go and get him and he says 'What the fuck does he know, crazy American. Music, who wants the fucking music?' but Bernie was right. The music would have glued it all together and it would have been great, but they couldn't afford it. So they got Wilfred Josephs and he wrote a wonderful score, and then Terry Gilliam did the titles, which was Vincent's head opening and all these demons coming out, and we're watching this picture at the cast and crew screening and it was great, you know. Given the fact that it was all cobbled together, it really worked.

And that's what got cut.

That's what got shipped over to Los Angeles and they're all sitting there, and I imagine they had to do something to justify their jobs, so they got Les Baxter to write a new score. So I'm glad I saw that screening, because that was the only time. Equally, Gordon had a cut of **MURDERS IN THE RUE MORGUE** which I didn't see, and he thought it was wonderful and then that got re-edited by AIP.

Now **MURDERS IN THE RUE MORGUE** has got two men who are in love with the heroine's mother. It's Christine Kaufman who plays the daughter, and she was also supposed to play her mother, because they are supposed to look exactly alike, which is why the two men are in love with her. I got this phone call from the director one day because they were making it in Spain, and he said we'd like some new scenes for Lilli Palmer. I said that's all very well. Great, Lilli Palmer, terrific, but what is she going to play in this picture, because there's no part for her. She was about sixty years old. They said 'Oh she's going to be the mother'. I said it's supposed to be played by the girl who's the daughter. They're meant to look alike. He said yes I know, but we need Lilli Palmer to sell the film in Germany. This woman is supposed to be an icon for the men, like an object almost, and she's having all these dreams and memories that she has become her mother, somehow, and she doesn't look at all like her mother. So lots of people were confused by this picture... (Laughs)

You made three films for Hammer.

I really had two periods with them. One was doing **DEMONS OF THE MIND** and **BLOOD FROM THE MUMMY'S TOMB** when I was like an outside person coming in, and then the period of **TO THE DEVIL A DAUGHTER** and other things when I was sort of a house person.

Had you been a fan of what they were doing?

Yes, because one of my early cinema memories is of going to see **DRACULA** in, whatever, 1958 at eleven o'clock in the morning at the first screening at the Plaza Cinema in Piccadilly Circus. I wasn't the right age for this certificate and assumed that they would pounce on me but they didn't. I was the only person in the whole place and there was the music and then Dracula came in and the clammy atmosphere and being alone in this cinema was one of the spookiest things, but they censored the death of Dracula. When Cushing rips the curtains down and goes clang with the candlesticks that's one of the great sequences, it's brilliantly done, but in those days it just ended, you didn't see shrivelled feet or anything.

I'd thought in this picture the truth would be revealed in some way. Around about the same time was that Brigitte Bardot movie **LOVE IS MY PROFESSION**, and this would explain all the mystery about sex, but it didn't do that either. I thought you bastard cinema, because the posters said 'In this movie you will learn all you want to know

about this and about that' and you didn't. They said 'All will be revealed', and nothing was revealed, at all. Well that's great, but don't lie. In a way I think we were lied to as audiences and that's why I want to tell the truth.

Of the films you wrote for Hammer, which is your favourite?

Well I suppose **DEMONS OF THE MIND**. It's more complete.

More of what you intended.

Yes. But I have a soft spot for **BLOOD FROM THE MUMMY'S TOMB**, although there were major traumatic problems about ever seeing it, because I thought somehow I'd doomed Seth Holt and I'd doomed Peter Cushing's wife - I had a real hangup about that movie. Seth was kind of an idol of mine, one of the few truly great British film directors. Hammer said 'Well, who shall we get to do this?' and I said 'well what about Seth Holt' and so I was delegated to go and talk to him to get him onto the picture. This is why I felt responsible because he died while he was making the picture.

He had a heart attack.

Yes, and I felt somehow if I hadn't got him into it then he wouldn't have died, and it took me ages and months and a friend finally said 'Listen, he died with his boots on, sort of thing - if you hadn't have got him onto the picture he wouldn't have made the picture - at least he died making a film.' That made me feel better, I could get up in the morning. Seth was the most intelligent, worldly wise person I've ever met in this business.

You were around for a lot of the filming of DEMONS OF THE MIND.

Yes, I was there pretty much all the time.. It was very funny because this was made after **BLOOD FROM THE MUMMY'S TOMB**, although both of them were in development at the same time, in parallel, and it got the point where the Mummy was made earlier than it was supposed to be because something else had dropped out of the equation. We went there not fully prepared, which might have been one of the problems which Seth had.

So **DEMONS OF THE MIND** went ahead and there was a week when they all went off to do preparation, and it was like the end of the world for me in a way, because I'd spent a lot of time on the picture. It was like something had been amputated. Then I got a call from Frank Godwin the producer - I mean, we'd dreamed the thing up together - saying 'Can you come out here?' and of course I went. It

was madness, because you got so little money for these things. I don't know how many months I spent on the picture really, for no extra money, but it was like all I needed after the traumas of **BLOOD FROM THE MUMMY'S TOMB**. With Seth dying, it was such a painful picture really, and Peter Cushing's wife died. He was going to be the Andrew Keir character, and then Helen Cushing died and he was so distraught that he couldn't go ahead. That's how Andrew Keir came into **BLOOD FROM THE MUMMY'S TOMB**, and he was good, very good I think. So **DEMONS OF THE MIND**, there's a lot of pain in that picture, more pain in that than there is in the Mummy movie somehow.

DEMONS OF THE MIND is mostly in the studio but there was location work at a mansion. Was that just for exteriors?

No, a lot of it is interiors. The hallway sequences, they were all shot there. The mansion was in Sussex. It was a folly called Bolney House, a few miles outside of Brighton. I don't know what it is now, then it was pretty much an abandoned house.

So they had to go in and clean it up?

Yes. We could only shoot in certain areas because the rest of it was not safe, so basically it was the grounds, and the ground floor, the hallway area. I think the ground floor was safe, but upstairs wasn't. Everything upstairs was done in the studio. I think that was the only Hammer picture of a gothic nature shall we say that was ever shot on location. It was only a week, but it was a major breakthrough that we actually went somewhere other than Bray. Going as far as Brighton, my God...

I've read somewhere that there are some Bavarian locations in DEMONS OF THE MIND...

No there weren't any.

So that's probably just publicity.

Yes. There were in **TO THE DEVIL A DAUGHTER**, some it was shot in Germany.

How did you come to write that? Did they say 'occult films are selling, we need something about black magic'?

No, they'd got a whole lot of Dennis Wheatley, the rights to a lot of titles, and I was involved with Michael Carreras on another project entirely and then suddenly **TO THE DEVIL A DAUGHTER** got it's go-ahead from EMI. It had been on and off for a long time. What I was originally developing with Michael was something from Rider Haggard. Another writer friend and myself discovered that Rider Haggard

was out of copyright in America but not yet out of copyright in England and there was something like three or four years to go, so they couldn't ask a lot of money for the English rights, basically. We wanted to do the Allan Quartermain stories. He was the hero of *King Solomon's Mines* and nobody had ever touched the other novels and stories, at least not in any coherent way, so we wanted to do a new Allan Quartermain for the movies, and then a TV series. That's what I was working on with Michael, and then they got the go-ahead for **TO THE DEVIL A DAUGHTER**, but they couldn't get a workable screenplay. Michael asked me to look at it and give it some thought, which I did, and then I got involved. The problem really was that it was **ROSEMARY'S BABY**. The movie had already been made. Now I looked at some of the other things and said 'the Dennis Wheatley book you ought to do is *They Use Dark Forces*'. It'll be a wonderful thing you could do because it's all about Nazism, and the Nazi Party's occult roots. You could really have done an interesting picture from that, but they said no, it had to be this one. Now the character in the book is really like Ernest Thesiger in **BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN**. What he's doing is creating homunculi. Reading it I thought 'Oh, what Wheatley's done here is he has pre-thought the whole concept of DNA and the idea of the genetic code'. I thought that's the way to tell the story, to go into this, because the concept of DNA was relatively new at the time. We got quite excited about this but the people who were running EMI said No, that's science fiction. If you include that element that makes it a science fiction movie, we don't want a science fiction movie, we want a horror movie. Somehow DNA was science fiction. That would have made a wonderful picture. To me the idea of **TO THE DEVIL A DAUGHTER** is that if there is anything at all in magic, basically it's science in a way that we don't comprehend. That to me is fascinating, that's what I thought we could have done there. They said no you can't do it, so we were stuck trying to remake **ROSEMARY'S BABY**, without remaking **ROSEMARY'S BABY**.

At the time you were writing had THE EXORCIST already been a success?

Oh yes. That was another problem, because suddenly that had elevated horror movies out of the ghetto into the mainstream. I think Peter Sykes did a very good job, and it looks nice, and moves along, and it's got mystery. I love those parallel stories, but it all went wrong because Michael



Carreras and I got involved in trying to get 'Vampirella' off the ground and they got another writer to work on **TO THE DEVIL A DAUGHTER** - to this day I don't know who it was.

John Peacock?

No he was the man who did the original stuff. They got a new person who was doing it day by day, and I've no idea who it was, and it all started to go off the rails then. If I remember correctly Michael had gone to America to try to get 'Vampirella' finally signed and sealed and I was left in charge, supposedly with no power, and was watching rushes, and these scenes were turning up and I had no idea what they were about. It was this other writer, and this is all perfectly fine, if other writers are there and they're doing things well that's great, if it makes any sense. But it wasn't making any sense at all. I said to Peter, look, this is really very worrying. Where is it going to go to? If it all has a logical sense then fine, but as far as I can see none of it all meshes in. After four or five days nobody really knew and I think I rang alarm bells to say let's go back to the main line once more, which was never written in tablets of stone anyway, and we just trusted that Peter and Roy Skeggs were going to pull it together, and they never did, essentially. The big action climax at the end and Richard Widmark throws a rock at Christopher Lee and hits him on the head, because the rock is made of...something, some mad thing the other writer came up with...

Like Kryptonite.

Exactly - and it's the silliest thing you've ever seen in your life.

Armageddon is prevented by a head wound.... *Films and Filming* at the time of the release of **TO THE DEVIL A DAUGHTER** said 'To entertain, amuse, terrify or frighten requires some thought and creativity, to sicken and disgust is about as artistic as picking one's nose in public.'

(Laughing) Well I think that picture is not something I would want to defend or champion. I think there's lot's of good things about it but it doesn't work as a movie. I think if she's talking about what's on the screen, then at least it hit a nerve...

◀ *Michael Gothard in the wonderfully bizarre
SCREAM AND SCREAM AGAIN*



Freez'er

Brian Avenet-Bradley interviewed by Marcelle Perks

*Film maker Brian Avenet-Bradley has a lot to explain. Not only did he play the part of Bud, the most unsavoury character in his first feature **FREEZ'ER**, his real wife played the frozen dead wife, battered to death by her husband. Let's hope it's not autobiographical!*

FREEZ'ER starts with a bang - a woman gets fatally smashed in the face with a baseball bat in the first few seconds. Why did you decide to start the film with this?

My intention was to start the film right off the bat, pardon the pun. Since there was no big name attached to the film, I knew it was important to grab the audience right from the start.

Sometimes the film appears to use real time footage to document the various inconvenient aspects of being a killer. Throughout, being a killer seems a lot of work!

It's funny that you say 'real time'. In reality of course, hours are compressed into minutes by showing just a sample shot to suggest the various details of the clean up. One swipe of the sponge across the floor to clean up the coffee, two dabs of the cloth on her face to clean up her bloody wound. Forcing the audience to spend time with this killer, watching him do the mundane tasks of cleaning up, was a way of making the audience be with him.

Was it weird having your wife play the murdered woman?

When I was editing the film, it started to get weird. But it didn't really sink in until I started showing some rough cuts of the scenes to people who weren't involved in the film. I got some weird looks. But there was a deliberate blurring of reality here for me. I really did marry my wife on that farm. That really is her wedding dress. The picture J.M. holds of her in the wedding dress on the farm is a real photo from our actual wedding.

J.M. repeatedly watches video tapes of his dead wife during the film and the argument that led to her murder is shown like video footage. Why did you choose this technique?

The Super-8 Camera has a setting to take single frames every so many seconds. So I carried the camera very slowly, with the still frames clicking away. Then when projected at 18 frames a second, the camera seems to be flying through the scene. Intercut with the single frame photography, were some shots photographed at 24 frames a second and projected at 18. This gives it a very slight slow-motion. These 'normal' shots were interspersed with the time-lapse footage and edited into the scene in little snippets. J.M. is unable to express himself on camera. He's so emotionally devastated by what he's done- he's gone almost completely numb so I used music and super-8 flashbacks to get inside his head.

A lot of information is conveyed by machines, and you use many tracking shots which almost personify cars, telephones and equipment. Are these to emphasise the killer's coldness? What are we to make of J.M.?

The dolly-in on the answering machine was to highlight the clue that's left right after Danny leaves. He will be coming back. J.M. is a normal guy who has a tragic flaw (a bad temper) and loses it for a second, making a deadly mistake. Once he's killed his wife, there's no going back. That's why he can't get rid of her body. As long as he keeps it, he somehow clings to the idea that she's still there. The murder of Bud is practically self-defense. The first conscious, planned murder that J.M. commits in the movie is the killing of John. This is a turning point. J.M. has his reasons- he's being blackmailed and he wants to protect Julie - but he still makes the conscious decision to kill John. This is the murder where J.M. in my eyes becomes a 'killer'.

When J.M. goes to the farm why are there so many tracking shots of the car?

I wanted to show how foreboding this beautiful farm is, the wide shots and slow pans at dusk, coupled with the eerie music, give the place a sense of dread. A little foreshadowing that good things won't be happening here. J.M. is completely emotional numb. And he practically drives to this place, the site of his wedding, on autopilot. He's instinctively going back to a place with good memories. He's trying to live in the past since he's destroyed her and his future.

An alternative title to the film could perhaps be 'Unwanted Visitors' - there is something almost demonic about the persistent visitors at the farm. The film seems to be as much about lack of privacy and inability of individuals to control their own lives and actions, as the murders. J.M. tries to flee to the farm to be alone, but even here the outside world comes a-knocking in the form of John, Julie and Bud. And the answering machine message leads to Danny being able to track him down there. While we were at the farm, we had a break-in at night and they took the exact same tools Bud tries to take in the movie.

Is J.M. a manic depressive? The shots from his P.O.V are isolated, colourless.

He does nothing to relax at the barn and seems to undergo little emotional development. He's just emotionally numb because of what he's done. His P.O.V. shots - and there are a lot of them, to put the audience in his shoes - are colourless. Nothing is giving J.M. any joy or happiness now. His only release comes in transient moments of action, when he is so busy, he temporarily forgets what he's done. The actions J.M. takes are violent or instinctive ones - chasing after Bud, fighting for his life against Danny.

The title of the film suggests it will be a black comedy with insane maniacs on the rampage. In reality the film is sensitive and plays to paranoid fantasies. Was it a commercial decision to use that title?

I came up with it because I liked the 'Freeze Her' contraction. One person even warned me someone would call it 'Corpsicle'. However, when the film started out, it was a much more ruthless black comedy complete with redneck rock-a-billy songs that accompanied the clean up of the murders and disposal of the bodies.

Was there a pressure to make the murders gruesome and to make the body count drive the plot?

Independent filmmaking's only pressure is lack of money.

We had complete creative control from our investors. I think the movie could have used another murder or two from a marketing perspective, but that wasn't the type of film it was. Now, I did want the murders gruesome. I wanted the gore horrific. If the murders were pretty or bloodless, then the killing wouldn't have the same emotional impact. In fact, if I had had a little more time, the death of Bud would have gone on longer. He would have climbed across the dirt floor of the barn, still bleeding, desperately trying to live, grabbing onto J.M.'s pants leg, pleading for help.

After getting rid of his wife, J.M. seems surprisingly open to Julie's charms. Why was this?

J.M. feels sympathy for Julie because of her abusive husband. In fact, he's kind to her because of his own guilt at what he's done. But he doesn't actually get close to her until she shows up wearing his dead wife's wedding dress. It's total projection. That's why Carrie Walrond was cast; she looks similar to Andrea. Same size, build, same long, dark hair. Somewhere in J.M.'s unconscious he's trying to make his wife alive again.

Why can't J.M. get rid of Andrea's body?

He still loves her. And in his emotionally numb and confused state, he equates her dead body as still being her. That's why he can't get rid of her body. He somehow clings to the idea that she's still there. Interestingly, once people knew about FREEZER, they would start sending me articles of people who were discovered with bodies in their freezer. The most startling of those was an apartment manager who discovered a man who kept the body of his girlfriend in a freezer for a year. Ironically, the man was busted by the manager because he had put a lock on the freezer, exactly what gives J.M. away.

There are numerous instances where J.M. gets discovered with the body in the freezer. Do you think you over used this as a plot device?

The freezer is the central object of the movie and freezers scare me. Our old family home had TWO full size freezers in the basement to store all the butchered parts of the cows from the farm. They would sit in that basement buzzing, plenty of room for four or five dead bodies!

How has the film been received?

It's been very well received by festival audiences, despite its budget. However, I must say the German audience who saw the film at Filmfest Hamburg appreciated the black comedy thread the most. They picked up on a lot of things the

American audience missed, especially in the redneck character of John. Other critics don't understand the film at all. In fact, they seem upset that I started the film with the killing without the usual ten minutes of back-story. The only people I have heard from who didn't like the film, didn't like it because they wanted to see a living dead type horror film. For the record, I love living dead horror films - if they're done by Romero. **FREEZ'ER** just isn't one of those movies.

Can you give us details of future projects?

We're shooting a film next summer which is much more of a horror film and will blur the lines of the psychological and supernatural. Most of the film takes place at an abandoned factory, and the main character is a serial killer. We're using a lot of the same crew, and we're taking what we've learned and making a movie that pushes the boundaries further than **FREEZ'ER**. We have more money and the script is much more intense.

▼ Andrea on ice: **FREEZ'ER**



director Brian Avenet-Bradley ►





Ljiljana Hadzihalilovic and Gaspard Noé at the L'Espresso magazine event in Paris, 1998

Living is a Selfish Act

Gaspar No  interviewed by Mitch Davis

*Gaspar No 's **IRREVERSIBLE** has brought his visceral and punishing brand of cinema to a wider audience in the UK. This interview took place as that project was being conceived, and just after the release of No 's first full-length feature, **SEUL CONTRE TOUS**.*

When did you first realize that you wanted to make movies?

When I was seventeen. I just finished my secondary school, my high school, I wanted to do comic books as a comic book artist. But I'm not very good so I thought I should do something else! I went to a film school when I was seventeen and came out when I was nineteen. I enjoyed doing a first short there, as a director. And you know, once you start something, when a kid starts drawing something and the parents like him for what he has done he becomes a painter later. Well, I went to this film school and I did this movie which was quite successful so I said well, maybe I could become a director. I did a second short and I worked a bit as assistant director. And then I started writing other scripts and between them there was this script of **CARNE** and I shot it. It took me a long time to shoot **CARNE**. And once it was released it was a huge success for a movie which was just forty minutes long. It was shown at Cannes and got prizes there. It was even shown in Sundance as a feature film, and was received everywhere as a feature even if it was just forty minutes. So I decided to do a sequel which would permit **CARNE** to really become a feature length movie. And in fact when I tried to raise financing for the feature length version of **CARNE**, I couldn't get any money from France because they said 'Well. No. You did this short. Now we know you can be subversive. Now why don't you calm down and do a normal movie with a normal producer and normal actors?' And in fact, I was rejected by Canal Plus, which pretends to be the most modern thinking TV channel. The woman in charge of feature film acquisition for this TV channel threw me like a disease. And I thought 'So that's it?

Okay, lady. Don't worry. I'll be back. But let's now figure how can I do this movie without that money'. And maybe because the movie was rejected, it made me really angry and I said I really have to do it and I just got some money from my friends in charge of the short films program of Canal Plus to do the sequel as a separate short called **SEUL CONTRE TOUS**. And in fact, I started this movie with that money. Later on, when I was in the middle of the shooting, I really ran out of money and was full of debts. And Agnes B., who had seen **CARNE** and was a big fan of the movie, helped me. She said 'Do you need money to finish the movie?', I said 'Yeah, of course'. And she gave me money. So I finished the shooting. And just after that, **CARNE** was released in Japan. I had sold them the movie, and with the small money I got from that sale I thought I could pay to begin the editing. It took me a long time to do this movie. It took me four years. In between, I started another movie as a producer, directed by my girlfriend (Lucile Hadzihalilovic) which was called **LA BOUCHE DE JEAN-PIERRE**, and almost all the money I had for my movie went on hers. So it was a big headache. Maybe there have been some very bad experiences but it was good for the movie. Now that it's finished I think I was so angry, I was so short of money that you can see it on the screen that I really identified in some moments with the butcher. You know, looking for money and thinking of killing people. But I know my weapon is not a gun as for him. My weapon is just a movie. But you know, there are some people I really hate in this business, and with this movie I can tell them 'Get it up your ass'.

So do you see filmmaking as a form of terrorism? Filmmaking literally as a weapon?

It's just a very luxurious and efficient way of expressing yourself. In life, some people just know that they have the power of their money. They can sign cheques, contracts and things like that. And they think they are bright just because they can sign these things because someone gave them the possibility to have this economical power over you. And they behave as censors. In France now, there is no problem with official censorship. Once your movie is finished, you always are R-rated. My movie is just R-rated in France. But when you meet French producers with a script like mine, they behave like the most fragile chickens in the world. They just tell you 'Oh, no. You should cut this. You should cut that'. And at the end you have been totally censored on the synopsis, and then on the script.

So it all happens at the treatment stage.

Yes, and they try to push you to rewrite the script if it doesn't look like a prime-time movie. There are some movies I love like **ERASERHEAD**, like **ANGST**, and I say, 'Well, those movies, I don't care how long it took them to produce them, but...'

Yes, ERASERHEAD took something like eight years!

And it's his best movie, you know? And Buñuel, maybe he did **UN CHIEN ANDALOU** and then **L'ÂGE D'OR** and he didn't do any other movie? No, he did this documentary **LAND WITHOUT BREAD**, but then for ten years he didn't do any movies. I say 'Well, if I had to go through a tunnel ten years without making any movies like Buñuel, I don't mind, as long as I did one good movie.'

And make it pure.

Yes. Make a movie that you can be proud of. Like Stanley Kubrick - after doing **2001**, he could die proud of himself. He had done a huge masterpiece...

CARNE, played the festival circuit, sold in Japan... What did it cost and did it ever make it's financing back?

The real cost - no one was paid on **CARNE** - the real cost was like sixty thousand dollars.

For 35mm scope?

In the end it was, but it was shot in 16mm scope, because I didn't have the money to shoot on 35mm scope. And even this one, **SEUL CONTRE TOUS**, was shot on 16mm scope. In fact, you just shoot with a normal camera - a 16mm camera - and you put an anamorphic lens in front of the normal lens. And you have to do the focus twice, but in the end you have an anamorphic 16mm that you blow-up to anamorphic 35mm and then you have a cinemascope movie. And later, when you transfer it to video and you show it on

TV or you show it on video, people think it is a 35mm movie. When people are switching channels they think this is a big budget movie because you know, scope movies shown on TV letterboxed are always the big budget movies.

The grandeur gives it a supposed legitimacy.

Yes. People sometimes, they just stop because they see this scope movie. They say 'oh, this is a real movie, this is not a TV movie'.

When you blow-up from scope 16mm to scope 35mm, is it considerably more expensive or more complicated than just doing a flat 16 to 35 blow-up?

Yeah it is. For negative editing reasons. The negative has to be done on an A and B (roll) so you don't see the cuts, the splices on the frameline.

The fact that you sold it to video anywhere is downright bizarre because there's usually no real market for short films, especially ones of such unwieldy length. When it's forty minutes, it's in that netherland between being a short and a feature. How did you promote it to actually get it sold?

In fact, **CARNE** was a big critical success and was also like a big festival success - it was in every festival in the world. But then when we had to sell it, either it was too violent, or it was just a short, so it couldn't get onto the video market because it was not a feature - it was not **HENRY**, it was not **TETSUO** - I'm good friends with Tsukamoto - that was a big hit also because it was a feature.

It's so strange how that works. If you're three minutes over an hour you're a feature. Like NEKROMANTIK. But if you're clocking at forty then you're just a short.

Yes. And that's why I started **SEUL CONTRE TOUS**, because I saw that if I could add thirty minutes to **CARNE** it would become a feature and then I could release it in a much more normal way. But in fact, when I started doing the sequel, I got excited during the shooting and I wanted to reshoot scenes and add scenes and I said 'sometimes you have the chance to do one movie, make it the best you can, put everything in it', so I added scenes every time. Every time I would shoot a scene I would add scenes and, at the end, the sequel was ninety minutes long and not thirty as it was supposed to be. I said 'well, I should just add an opening scene like in **ANGST** which would explain what happened in **CARNE** and I have a totally new movie! And now, no one cares about **CARNE**. This is the movie.

You used ninety percent the same cast as CARNE - was it difficult to get those people back after so long?

No, no. I had some problems. Not to get the people back, but because when you start a movie - when it's a short, people don't care - but when it's a feature they want money. They think you are getting into the industry when in fact, I had much less money to do this one than I had to do **CARNE**. But the butcher (Phillipe Nahon) was great during the whole movie. During the whole picture he was really involved. He didn't care about if he would be paid or not, he really wanted to do the movie as much I wanted to do it. **Was he a professional actor? Where did you find him?**

Of course, but because of his age - you know, you can become a star when you're thirty or forty, but he's like fifty and for reasons that I cannot understand, he didn't become a star when he was forty or thirty. Maybe he didn't have enough money to promote himself, or maybe he got into some fights with people in the past, I don't know. But he's a great, great guy. He's the most lovely guy in the world and even if he's scary in the movie, he's the sweetest father that you can think of. I really enjoy working with him. I proposed to him not to - he accepted not to read the script - he just read the synopsis of the movie - and he would come every day. If I said 'you have to be at the shoot tomorrow at eight in the morning', he would be there at seven thirty you know, waiting for us with the coffee ready. He was really amused by the fact that he would kind of improvise every single scene during the shooting. That's why people look natural (in the film) too, because I said 'well, I don't want to give any lines to anybody because otherwise they come out like bricks from their mouths. The important thing is the meaning of the scene, not the words you use and I prefer that you find your own words to express the scene.'

That approach makes sense here because you had the relative freedom of knowing that you would add voice-over for so much of the film, so during the shoot you could really zero in on spur-of-the-moment emotions and body language. The structure of the film really lends itself to this sort of approach.

I really wrote the voice-overs and he read that, and in fact there was much more voice-over in the original text I wrote because I thought that maybe one sentence out of four that he would read wouldn't sound great, so I added so I can cut and still have this oppressive voice-over all the time. So I said well how much - I have like sixty minutes of voice-over that I can use in the movie. So I should write for two hours so once I cut all the silences, you know, when he's breathing, the pauses, and once I cut all those things that don't sound

great, I could still have that. I could have had two hours of voice-over, but in the end they're just sixty minutes long. I think if you really count them, over ninety minutes of movie you have sixty minutes of voice-over. And you know, the actor was a bit scared of the voice-over - he said 'people are going to kill me!' I said 'yeah, they'll kill you but they'll kill me first so you can run!'

What was his background before working with you?

He worked in a Melville movie called **LE DOULOIS** - he was very young, he was twenty five years old I think.

Has he ever had any major exposure?

No, no, no. He had small parts in many different movies (including **LA HAINE**)

So he's Joe Spinell?

(laughs). But now he's coming out. Since this movie he is very well respected by young directors and everyone. He came a bit late in his own career but he's very glad that now he's recognized.

Were there any things in the script that he just didn't want to do?

No! No.

Let's talk about the intertitles. Both films feature moments where you throw text across the screen that directly addresses the audience in the first person. Would it be fair to think that with these words, you're addressing the audience directly - as yourself - or are you just keeping the film in tone with its protagonist?

You have 'death opens no door' and 'survival is a genetic law' and 'man is a moral being'. That's my point of view, when you see the title cards, that's my own point of view. When I write in the movie 'death opens no door', I really think it. I think it's funny because people always talk about astral projections and things like that and everybody wants to lie to himself, pretending that there's something else more than just the normal life you're living in. Because sometimes life is so heavy and they prefer - even myself - but I think that it's much brighter just to assume that you're an animal in the jungle and you have to survive.

Both films - **CARNE and **SEUL CONTRE TOUS** - between all the intertitles and voice-over play very much like manifestos. Is there any one thing that you'd like the audience to be thinking when they leave the theater?**

I don't know. I think you direct a movie just to express your own self. There are some things, some girls tell me I'm a sex maniac, or people I don't know think that I'm a fascist, but I don't feel like it. I really think I'm not Communist either,

because I don't belong to any political group. But maybe I should. I am Left Wing. I am a Humanist. But I was attacked as a fascist when I was showing **CARNE!**

You were attacked as a fascist?

Yeah, because some people said 'well, why did this guy stab this Arab' and I said 'well, because workers in France are Arabs'. They said 'well, because if you show a man stabbing an Arab in France it's because you're a fascist, you belong to the National Front' and they started talking about morals. That if you direct a movie, you have to behave morally and this is it. It was too much for me. I said 'well, if you want to talk about morals, in the next movie we'll talk about morals'. If you just open your dictionary, 'morals' is the sense that separates good from evil. And if you really want to see what evil is, it just says that 'evil is the opposite of good' and if you say 'then what is good?', it says that it's the opposite of evil. You can put whatever you want inside evil and good in morals. I think in life, people know what they want. They want to survive, they want to have a family. They want to procreate because it's in the genetic law. And in this case (of **SEUL**) you have this man who has problems to feed himself - maybe he's too animal to behave in a clever way - so he doesn't find a clever way to survive and fulfill his own needs, and at the end of the movie well, at least there's the one need he can fulfill. It's his need of love - in a very twisted way. There is an ending, because you identify with the character and when he comes to this end - not you, because you're very open-minded - but a lot of people are totally fucked up by the end of the movie. Because they say 'it's like a happy end, but it shouldn't be and - where did you bring us to?!'.

Well, what's your take on incest? Do you actually feel that for some people in certain situations it could actually make family relationships better?

I think there can be incestuous love. In most cases, I don't know how much, I cannot say if it's ninety nine percent or eighty percent, but the problem with incestuous relationships is that they often come from frustration. And from need of power. Sometimes people who feel powerless, they come to bother their own kids, or they come to bother children. In paedophilia in general, there is this really disturbing thing which is like the abuse of your power. In the most disturbing way. But I think that people can fall in love with someone who is not of their own generation. In this case, well this man, the character of my movie, I'm not sure. Because I think the character of my movie is not clever

enough. He is too stupid - and when he pretends that he is in love with his daughter, in fact he just wants to love someone to survive. And the only person that he can pretend to love is his own daughter. The relationship that he can have with her is going to be a really cheap thing, and he pretends that it is going to be a big love. But I don't think it is going to be a big love. Because of the circumstances around, it is going to be like a very pathetic love.

How do you feel about the people who say that if you make a film about a paedophile, you're a paedophile, about a Nazi, you're a Nazi, about a rapist you're a rapist, unless you openly condemn the act in the narrative? What do you say to people who identify you that wholly with a movie that you make?

Most people feel threatened by anything that is different from them. I think that in the American film industry - or even in the European cinema - movies are made not to disturb any kind of class or any kind of minority. And in fact, this is an aggressive movie but it's not aggressive towards any particular minority. It's aggressive to the whole world. And that's why the movie in French is called **SEUL CONTRE TOUS**. It means alone against the world. And in fact it was translated as **I STAND ALONE** because it's a much more common expression in English. In French you say 'I'm alone against the world' and that means 'I hate everybody and everybody's against me'.

You know, I wanted to ask you about horsemeat. Up until I saw **CARNE I didn't realize that it was illegal in most of the world except France. In that film, when it explains this, it's implied that this is an almost demeaning thing. Is there anything you'd like to say about that?**

It's because when I shot **CARNE** I wanted the character to be a butcher and at the last minute I said well, 'this thing in France, that people eat horses' - and I ate horsemeat too - but it's banned in the rest of the world. It's like these things are accepted here and they're forbidden somewhere else, and it was funny because this butcher has incestuous thoughts or very passionate feelings about his daughter, if you show him as a horsemeat butcher, he will look much more vicious. And much more male at the same time, because horsemeat is the most male meat you can think of. That's why workers in France like horsemeat, because it's like a male thing that makes you strong. Cow meat is a much more female meat.

Because of its tenderness?

Yes, it's a much more passive meat.

Was it difficult to get permission to shoot the slaughterhouse footage?

I shot it myself. It was very hard. I had this assistant who was a girl who was twenty, we would call nineteen slaughterhouses and they would all refuse us to shoot there. The girl who was Assistant Director, she called the twentieth and said (putting on a mock-feminine voice) 'we're doing this documentary for a film school, it's the story of this young horse, he gets older and he gets killed and we want some soft images of this horse getting killed, we won't show the blood', and the guy, I think he got excited by the voice of the young girl and he said 'okay, come tomorrow, seven in the morning'!

And you shot LE SANG DES BÊTES!

Yeah! And he was there the next day when we came with the camera, and he said 'where's the girl? Where's the girl I talked to??' (bursting into laughter). And finally, he accepted us to shoot, but we were not supposed to shoot such gory scenes. I think that there was a kind of agreement between all the slaughterhouses in France that they should never accept any shooting, that this man betrayed. And he asked 'please do not put my name on your credits'. And then we told him 'but don't worry, this movie, I don't even know if we're going to finish it or if it's going to be shown anywhere'.

I want to ask you about your technical style - the camera cutting and sound. Not to draw French New Wave connections, but your style is very revisionist. I was wondering, seeing as SEUL CONTRE TOUS is an extension of CARNE, the intertitles, pixelated zooms and voice-over are congruent to the first, when you make another, different movie will you use these devices again?

I wanted to keep on the same aesthetic. The next project I do will have nothing to do with the subject or the - I'm going to change totally the aesthetics of the movie. Maybe in a certain movie I could come back to the title cards and these weird effects but for the moment I'm going to go for another thing. I was just thinking that if one day both movies were to be shown together on a tape it would be better if they had the same ratio and the same kind of effects and everything. It could be like the direct sequel.

Which countries have bought the film so far?

For the moment I have this sales agent who's going to take care, but I received proposals from England, Scandinavia, Japan, and the U.S.A.

England's going to be a rough one for this film.

But they can show it as long as they don't show it in normal theaters. They can show it in clubs where you have a

membership card and also at the NFT or the Institute Of Contemporary Arts - they can show it as long as it belongs to the state. Otherwise, if it's at a theater owned by someone who doesn't work for the state, they could be attacked for obscenity and it's funny, so the only people who can really exploit the movie theatrically are the government! So I received a proposal from the ICA, from the NFT. And there are some theaters in Edinburgh who could show it too, because they are associative. So you don't have to go through censorship because it is like a kind of museum and you can show everything. I don't think I could release it with this editing on video. I think in England I'll go for a scandal if they ban the movie, I'll go to every single newspaper and say 'you should be ashamed of your country, you are retarded compared to the rest of Europe' (laughs).

Both films in places have a strange sense of patriotism. In general, do you love France?

When I thought up the movie it was during a very right wing period, run by Pasqua as the Ministry of Interior (Security) and there were all these xenophobic laws that were voted in. It was just before the socialists came back to power. The State had become so racist that you could start some kind of racism against France. Because the government was voting racist laws, you could become anti-French. I think that the image of France that is given by this movie is very bleak. The French movies that are promoted abroad are the ones that give like a trendy, cultural, petit-bourgeois, upper class image of France, but it's true that people who are poor in France are the same as in New York or in India. People who are poor, they are poor and they suffer a lot. And people drink a lot and people take a lot of downers and there's a lot of unemployment.

But are people less prone to helping each other out in France? In general, is it a much colder atmosphere on a social level? How are people towards their neighbors when they need help?

I think British people for example can handle better their own poorness. The image of their poorness. But in France people don't handle it very well. Either you are normal or - if you are poor you better not show it. Movies dealing about social subjects in France become very paternalist. They want to teach lessons. They don't show poorness like a normal situation. I think in my movie at one point I didn't identify with the character in many aspects but considering his poorness, I saw that being poor is a normal thing. I don't think this guy is less a person because he is poor then if he

had one million dollars in his account. He would be exactly the same. For me, in my level of perception, both of them are humans and they deserve the same respect, but in France like in most countries, the respect you receive also depends on your class. Sometimes I have better relationships with my barber then with people who are into cinema from an upper class. I belong to the Petit Bourgeoisie somehow, because of my parents, I'm not from a lower social level, but I think I relate more to lower levels then to people who've got money. And France is a very paternalistic society where people have to be introduced. It's funny - in North America someone who doesn't know anybody, he can go - you can be respected for your own identity. It pushes your personality to become stronger. In France, it's just - if you're the son of someone, you can be sure that you will have a good life. Because you're the son of this guy or the daughter of this guy, you will be introduced to this person who will give you a job even if you're totally incompetent. America in some ways is much more a democracy then France. It is and it's not. The power that a president has in France is like the power of a king. In America, you know that his power is limited. Maybe because there used to be a king for centuries and now they're still behaving like they need a king. In England they need a king, in Spain they need a king, in France there is no more king. But they consider the president as if he was a king.

How would you describe the political climate of French youth right now?

It's just another liberal democracy. But it pretends to be a calm left. Not an angry left.

How do CARNE and SEUL CONTRE TOUS reflect the current reality of the French working class?

They don't really, because he doesn't work. He is unemployed. He would like to belong to the working class (laughs). He is like a lumpen. He is a person who belonged to the working class who became a lumpen. It's funny because the movie was shown in Sarajevo and it got the main prize - almost everyone identified with this character! They all went through this thing of not having money to feed themselves. There was no more food in Sarajevo during the war and they all had guns with a number of bullets they could use. So it's funny that it was a big hit. Someone said 'I've been through that, I've already felt like the butcher for YEARS'. I think when you are really in deep shit, you can come to have these racist ideas or any kind of 'against the other' ideas. You know, anything that's not you. I'm sure if

you were a Bosnian during the war, you would wish to kill Serbs. Just because it is the opposite of you and because they're aggressors. And also, it happens to me when I get attacked. I almost added a title card in the movie which says 'VENGEANCE IS A HUMAN RIGHT'. I'm very much into vengeance, in the way that if someone attacks, you have to attack him twice if you want to survive.

Then how do you feel about capital punishment? I mean, I don't trust any government enough to give them the right to kill - if anything it should be left to the individuals involved, if at all - but in extreme cases, how do you feel about death for a person who can only live his life hurting others - for someone who has proven this again and again?

I met this guy in France who is a specialist in serial killers and he told me that at the beginning he was against the death penalty, but he said that 'since I've met some serial killers for interviews, I'm really for the death penalty because these guys really enjoyed killing and killing again.' I never really thought, but I know that sometimes in my own life I really felt like killing people. Because if someone disturbs you, they didn't kill you, but you really feel like 'I wish this guy was dead' - you know that you will not kill him yourself, but if he gets struck by a truck or by a train, you would really be happy. The good thing about forbidding the death penalty is that people don't kill people who are not guilty, but at the same time there are some people that are just such a mental mess that you know, they will never get out of their obsessions and they can keep them forever and if between their obsessions there is one that says they're not scared of killing other people... I know that in my own personal life, if someone for example - if I had a kid, and someone had touched my kid like in CARNE, I am sure that if I had a gun or a knife, I would go and stab the person who I supposed touched my kid.

Rather then call the police?

Oh yeah, yeah. I am not a police fan at all. It's not that I dislike the police, but I would never go to the police for anything. It's just that I prefer not - not calling them. And sometimes, even when you know, your neighbors, for any reason they want to call the police - the only reason I would call the police is if someone is getting attacked in the street and I'm behind a window. But if myself, I have to take some kind of revenge because my girlfriend has been attacked, my mother has been attacked or my kids have been attacked, I think I would go for personal revenge. I talked

about this with my father. He's much more into forgetting and forgiving, but I'm much more into revenge.

Also, when you bring the government in, it's almost an act of submission. You're giving them even more power. You're giving them that power to decide if what this person did was really all that bad after all, and what form of punishment it calls for.

And it usually gets lost because your anger gets lost over time. If you sue somebody it takes two years, three years, and your anger just gets lost in between and even if you win or lose the trial, it takes such a long time. If you want to really take a personal revenge, you'd better do it by yourself and at the right time.

Would you consider yourself to be a pacifist?

I like more periods of peace and love. Societies have progressed much more during times of peace times than during wars. But war, sometimes you have to go for it, you know? For example, if you're a Bosnian and suddenly you get attacked by the Serbs, there's just one way of getting rid of your opponents. It's taking revenge and trying to fight as hard as you can. If the Nazis have been destroyed it's because America got into the war. They went for it and they got into the fight. I think that wars will never stop, it's just that there are sides. You have to choose your side. And there are more progressive sides.

Is there a particular country where SEUL CONTRE TOUS has had bigger success than others?

I think if there is one country where the movie had more problems than in other countries it was in Belgium, because they've had these problems, so I think they were a bit shocked because the whole country decided that they wanted to fight against paedophilia and in fact, my movie is not pro-paedophilia at all, it's just about the pathetic story of a man that only finds the solution to survive. It doesn't rave about him, it doesn't condemn him either, it just shows how this guy comes to this, but because of the general mood in Belgium now, the movie had some very good responses but very bad responses too. It was shown at the Cinematheque in Belgium and it was a big scandal there. I was surprised. People called the Cinematheque and said that they would never go to the Cinematheque again. It's weird, but I can understand. Public enemy number one, which was this Mark Dutroux, that he could just run away from prison and get caught by a civilian, it was too much!

It was also the direct ties to the government with this case that must have made everyone very uncomfortable.

And also, there was another case because they found there was some other people selling tapes, porno tapes with kids like two months later and it was too much so now they're... (laughs)

Looking at CARNE and SEUL CONTRE TOUS, was there any one incident in your life that inspired you to do the story, let alone to do it twice?

Maybe it was the fact of being rejected. I felt attacked because people rejected me. They didn't say 'we can give you money to do something else if you want', they just said 'no, this movie has not to be done' and I said 'okay, so I'll do it!' Well CARNE was inspired by THE HONEYMOON KILLERS and this one was more inspired by ANGST. It's just like movies that you want to do. Because there are other movies that you liked before and you want to do better than the original. I don't know if I did better than the original, but I knew which original I liked.

Postscript: new Gaspar Noé film, **IRREVERSIBLE**

Actors

Monica BELLUCCI	Alex
Vincent CASSEL	Marcus
Albert DUPONTEL	Pierre
Philippe NAHON	Philippe
Jo PRESTIA	The Tapeworm

Synopsis

Irreversible. Because time destroys everything. Because certain acts are irreparable. Because man is an animal. Because the will to get revenge is a natural impulse. Because most crimes go unpunished. Because the loss of a loved one destroys like lightning. Because love is the source of life. Because premonitions don't change the course of things. Because time reveals everything. The worst and the best.

Extracts of Dialogue

You don't look good. It's hard... You think it only happens to others, and when it happens to you, you lose your mind. Huh? They're gonna catch him, put him in prison, give him food, clothe and wash him. They'll give him a doctor... I dunno, you look like good people, well-dressed. Looks like you can afford it. With a little money... we can help you ... get revenge. The attacker drew blood... Blood calls for revenge... Vengeance is a human right.



To sleep, perchance to scream

George Barry interviewed by *Daniel Craddock*

*The term "strange film" is perhaps over-used these days but **DEATH BED** qualifies in spades. It may not cause sleepless nights but that is because its effect is subtle: once seen never forgotten. Daniel Craddock was lucky enough to speak with its creator, George Barry.*

How did you come to make **DEATH BED?**

We're going back thirty years now. The majority of people alive on earth now may not yet have been born. People were born, lived and died but they did so without video (as we've come to know it), cable TV and the internet especially. So the media and the world were closer to the printer Gutenberg in some ways than they are now. In the early seventies I was coming to the end of my non-degreed tenure at Monteith College (Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan). Wayne State had a small, almost in-name-only film department out of which I did little (like everybody else, including its staff) but I was writing and working on b&w 16mm student films - my own and others. I decided to make a feature film and managed to scrape up a few thousand dollars. I wanted to be able to get it shown. With the money at hand, a 16mm color production, a genre film, something for the decaying urban movie house market seemed a reasonable idea. Of course it would have to be blown up to 35mm for theatrical release which would cost around \$10,000 (a tremendous cost in context) but first of all the movie would have to be started, shot and finished. Sexploitation would have been the most practical genre for the budget and I did consider it but I was more interested in other types of story. Regarding the actual narrative of the movie, I think I had a dream about a bed. I can't recall the details now and perhaps I may not have really remembered it much at the time either. There may have been a vivid image or two of an engulfing bed but no great detail. Off and on I wrote it more as a fairy tale than a horror story. Though as I said earlier, it would have to be a horror story due to commercial considerations if I was going to make the movie. Commercial considerations came

and went during the course of the film's long start-and-stop production though many had been disregarded during post production when some of the few-enough synched sound scenes and a fair degree of the nude footage was cut out.

Where was **DEATH BED shot?**

The core of the film was shot in 1972 in about a three week stretch. There were two additional shoots in 72-74; both may have been long weekends. Filming was done in the metro Detroit area. The cast and the crew were mainly from there too, though a few people came in from Canada. The film was processed in Detroit and the sound was mixed in Toronto.

What was the shooting process like?

There was never more than a few thousand dollars at any one time. The production was start and stop for five years. Equipment rental and lab work were paid for and the sound mix was done on spec'. Primary cast and crew got cigarette and gas money, \$100-\$200 a week. Others got even less. Often it was a difficult shoot. A major mistake I realized right away was not having any real production manager. Another major mistake was my approach to the sound. If I had balanced properly the requirements of the story with the budget I should have realized that the dialogue needed to be post synched. I'm not going to go on about all the mistakes that I've allowed myself to remember though. It's just that a thinly budgeted production doesn't need to be handicapped by overly stupid errors. You simply waste needed time and strain people's reserves. To their credit though most people remained good sports most of the time.

The film seems like a mood piece, a bad dream ...

I never set out to make **DEATH BED** an intentionally strange story. Oh, I wanted it to be a bit different, I guess.



Why do the same old stuff all the time? Done before, done better, done worse - why do it again? But, I think, if you set out to do a midnight/cult type of movie its artificial manufacture becomes far too apparent. Odd but not creative. Frenzied but passionless, though of course none of this crossed my mind whilst I was working on the film. When we talked on the phone you asked something like "do I realize how strange this movie is?" well, no. At least it's no stranger than things I've written before or since.

How was post-production?

Ron Medico edited the film. We worked on bits and pieces of it over a long period of time but the body of the movie was edited in about three months. I had it in my mind that 80 minutes was the minimum running time needed for a theatrical release. We never wavered from that one concern, though we did find ourselves stretching the movie to reach the required 80 minute mark. Looking back on it, since the movie was never blown up to 35 mm for a theatrical release that major concern seems unnecessary now. Other commercial considerations fell away. There were not many synched dialogue scenes yet some of those were cut out and I did what rewriting I could (at that stage) to cover the story restructuring. There was more nudity (all very soft-core like what remains) and that was cut also. Ultimately, it seems foolish to say this, we just wanted to make the best movie we could out of the footage that we had. I don't want to give the impression a lot of footage was shot; it probably ended up around a five to one ratio.

Did the completed film ever secure any kind of release?

After the 16mm answer print of **DEATH BED** was finished



in 1977 I began to approach film distributors, mainly small ones. I felt that I had no chance with even a middle ranked distribution company. The response was not overwhelmingly enthusiastic. Over the next two to three years I may have contacted as many as forty or fifty. Many simply didn't like the film. Others had been financing their releases through tax shelters and those shelters were closing or had already been closed up. Even if that hadn't been the case, the budget of the film was too small to be attractive for a tax shelter package. The few distributors that were interested were put off by the cost of the 35mm blowup. A couple of them offered me contracts but they came to nothing. Not that I was being fussy (I couldn't afford to be) but the contracts were incompetent deceptions. By the early eighties video was coming in, there were more people to talk to and a few actually contacted me, but by this time I had lost energy and when nothing materialized by the end of 1983 I pretty much forgot about it.

Then you saw the Lightsfade review ...

I think the bootleg would have had to be made sometime between 1977-83. I do have suspicions of who may have pirated **DEATH BED** but very uncertain ones since at this moment I don't even know who ended up releasing the video in England. I am very happy (and absolutely amazed) the film has reached an audience. I just hope that Lightsfade suffers no damage from it's fondness for **DEATH BED**. Have any of you, after mentioning you think the film watchable, found yourselves being avoided by friends, family or intimate partners? Of course, maybe not - maybe they haven't seen it yet.



DEATH BED director George Barry and daughter



David Bowie in his signature role as 'Thomas Newton' in THE MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH

L'homme fatale

Paul Mayersberg interviewed by *Daniel Bird*

*Paul Mayersberg was born in Cambridge in 1941 and was educated at Dulwich College. He worked for a short time in advertising before acting as an assistant director in Paris and London for Jean-Pierre Melville, Joseph Losey and Roger Corman. He was a founder editor of Movie Magazine. In 1967 he published an account of working in Los Angeles, Hollywood The Haunted House which featured interviews with Stanley Kramer, Hitchcock, John Sturges and Don Siegel. During the 1970s and 80s he produced screenplays for two of Nicolas Roeg's best films, **THE MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH** and **EUREKA**, as well as Nagisa Oshima's **MERRY CHRISTMAS MR LAWRENCE**. As writer and director his films include **CAPTIVE** (1986), **NIGHTFALL** (1988) and **THE LAST SAMURAI** (1990). During the 90s, Mayersberg produced several violent, sexually explicit noir-style novels, *Homme Fatale* and *Violent Silence*. Most recently he wrote the screenplay for Mike Hodges' **CROUPIER**. This interview was conducted in August 1998 when **CROUPIER** was still in distribution limbo.*

The credits for EUREKA imply that you adapted the screenplay from an existing text.

There was never an adaptation. A book was written by a man called Marshall Houts. The book was an account of the trial of the man accused of murdering Sir Harry Oakes in the Bahamas, Paradise Bay. We re-named it Lunar Bay. The book was written by a lawyer who lives in Southern California because there was a clause under English colonial law whereby the governor of wherever this territory was could stand in for the King of England as a protectorate, I guess. And the governor of the Bahamas then was the Duke of Windsor. So when he heard of the murder of Harry Oakes, his first reaction was, 'it's suicide' - now a man's head was cut off, he's covered in tar and feathers, and 'this is suicide, we'll fix it'. And so something happened. Well they couldn't fix it. Then came a group from Miami. They wouldn't use any police investigators from the Bahamas. Remember Harry Oakes was one of the richest men in the world. And what happened was that finger prints which were on a screen were moved. They put them somewhere else and said they were there and they were here. In other words it was offered in evidence moving the fingerprints to incriminate Alfred de Marigny. That's the Rutger Hauer character. That was the substance of the book. It was an account of the

trial of Alfred de Marigny. It had a background of Harry Oakes, but there were other books on Harry Oakes, and this one just accounted for the trial and the reactions to the trial and the loopholes in the law and how colonialism had manipulated this, that or the other. That was basically what it was. So it was in a sense a work of legal archeology, to put it that way. There was no more to it than that.

How would you account for the critical and commercial failure of EUREKA?

I think I wouldn't be out of turn to say that we were very upset by the response to **EUREKA**, Nic especially was quite hurt. Hurt sounds miserable, surprised really, by the failure of **EUREKA**. A real failure, I mean nobody wanted it. Now of course, there are a few people in the world who rate it very highly, but in fact, it did not do well and it was buried.

The first fifteen minutes are incredible, and what's even more surprising is how that initial momentum is carried through the next two hours, but what happened to the end?

The end is (hesitates) similar, though similar is the wrong word, to **THE MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH**, for which there was also a lot of fuss about the ending, if you remember. Maybe you share that criticism?

Not at all.

PM: I think, although I didn't at the time of **EUREKA**, looking back now, the way things end up in the world and in life was very accurately reflected. Not how *stories* end. There was a style to both those films, a narrative style which is saying, look, after the drama is over, there is a winding down and other stories may or may not begin and it isn't over like that. It's over only as it is in everybody's life, in a series of stages. It's very important because it's very realistic.

Jodorowsky has talked about there being only cycles, no beginnings or ends. EUREKA, like EL TOPO, climaxes, in a sense, earlier rather than later in the film.

Yes, it's very important. It's particularly important in **EUREKA**. Here is a man who arrived too late in his forties. To find the gold, to achieve that sudden ecstasy in life, which he did. Now most people would achieve it at twenty-five and end up at forty dead. So the awkwardness of the success of Jack McCann provided us with a clue to the awkwardness of life. And one of the reasons why I do not think the film was a success, quite apart from any aesthetic reasons, was that it said that when a man achieves what he wants he doesn't go on to achieve anymore. It didn't seem fair to an American audience. Now remember this was the year of Reagan. Oddly enough, people were wandering around Hollywood saying 'Eureka 80' because Eureka was where Reagan came from and that was the slogan. So the bad news was when you get what you want you don't want it. This didn't go down well at all. People were saying 'well, what's the point of the film?' So by the end, when you get to the trial and after, it got lost on many people because they never accepted the premise of the story, they just didn't like it. They didn't like to think that their lives could or would be like that. That's to say, what happens when somebody is called. First of all there is an ambiguity. He got himself killed. He went out to die. I can't kill myself, I'll get the others to do it for me. So he got people effectively to kill him. That itself is not a very pleasant notion. Why didn't he do it himself? Is he a coward? But I don't think people got that far into it because they just thought this was very strange, because they sensed that the man was surrounded and cornered. But the idea that he had arranged it, that he deliberately made people angry by being rude to them and so forth in order to get himself killed, was an idea that never quite registered with most of the people who saw the film. If you understand that then you understand what happens at the trial when everybody begins to think that they did it. And that trial implicated everybody. Everybody in the

audience in the courtroom, they all did it. But they didn't and yet they did. So where did that come from? We thought about the great trial scene in *The Brothers Karamazov* where Demitri Karamazov is tried for the murder of his father whom he didn't kill. But what happens, the mastery of Dostoevsky in that wonderful 150 page scene is that *everybody* did it. And they didn't of course, and they didn't know who did it and it turns out that Samkov did it. But it doesn't matter, when someone is on trial you become implicated yourself in a sense. Now everybody did it. And what that trial scene did in my opinion which I think was wonderful, I have to say, is that it exposed everybody. And what it did to Claude and Tracy was it exposed their marriage because it was all based on the dead. And we put this big blow-up in the court which is completely unrealistic but it looks so bizarre but you think it's real. The point is that you are hearing a marital argument in the middle of a courtroom and I thought it was wonderful, I mean me personally. Because what it shows you is that after all this you come home and have a screaming row with your wife or girlfriend and out of nothing somehow it provokes everything, its seismic. Rather like, and now I don't want to be over-grand about this but, rather like *Julius Caesar*. Now you couldn't call it *Julius Caesar* nowadays because he's dead at the end of act two, right? You've got three more acts when he's not it. So what does it mean - where's Jack McCann? Is he coming back? No, he's not coming back. That's it. They have to go on. And so it was like that. Its called *Julius Caesar* because that's the pivot. Its not *about* Julius Caesar. It's about what happens when you murder somebody. And that's the sort of area we'd hoped to have rummaged around in. It exposes everybody else. People who are honest become villains. People who are obviously out for their fortunes, like Mark Anthony was going to make a living out of it being Caesar. He's not creepy, but he was nothing before, bugger all. Like Al Pacino was not really the most important person until Don Corleoni died. And I can remember seeing that, and I'd never seen Al Pacino in my life before and I didn't think of him as being anything other than a character in a story. So what we tried to do was that when something happens to a man it affects everybody but the effects are as important as what happens. Because most people are not killed and don't murder. And that's their story. It was rather the way for example, in a completely different context, the way Bergman treated war in **THE SHAME** which I still think is one of the great films. There isn't any war, it's just

what these people experience. So that's what we tried (laughs). I think the reason one of the reasons very few people like or admired it or responded to it, was that they never really coped with the idea that he, the old bastard, had got himself killed. And he does, he provokes it. Never mind. **Let's talk about THE MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH. There's certainly a gap between Walter Tevis's relatively straightforward science fiction novel and your screenplay for THE MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH.**

Yes, there's a big gap. What we took out is the politics. The idea, which is a large part of the book, I don't remember how much, a quarter or a third of the book, is about the politics of the president and the whole senate, that obviously had to go. It was very much interesting in the sixties when the book was written but it was not...

Relevant?

No. Although you could make another film actually, where it would be really interesting. The alien in Washington. But anyway, that is not what we wanted to do. Basically, as I remember, I read the book, made notes and then I worked with Nic and said we like this, we don't like that, well that could be interesting if... We actually filleted the book of the best scenes which were all in the book and in the film, we were actually quite faithful. What's not faithful perhaps is the fact that we didn't have everything but the scenes that we did have from the book were quite close. So, having selected the scenes we liked, now what? We began to link them - it developed that way. It was written quite quickly, the first draft, it flowed out. And it was much much longer of course, there were many many different sorts of things, all kinds of things. I tend to write a lot more than I use, or at least I did then. Now not so much. But with Nic on that, and on **EUREKA**, I think then I wrote about fifteen hundred pages. When we first started. Originally **EUREKA** was about Harry Oakes, it was following his life. I read some biographies. I think the first sixty pages was up in the Yukon and up in New Zealand, so it was a huge canvas before he ever got to find the gold. He didn't find the gold until page seventy. With **MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH** it was different. We tried different sorts of scenes. We tried a planet scene. What's his life on the planet? What's this, so it was like a jig-saw. It began like that really. Faithful to the book, the first scene and the last scene are identical to the book, okay I changed a few words, but basically, and the central scenes are very much what it is. And then we added things. The death of Farnsworth was quite different, all that kind of

stuff. The black guy who became a general, of course that's happened with Colin Powell. They said that's a joke, how can a black guy be a general? Wait and see. Now that wasn't so long ago, it was 1976 for Christ's sake

...(tape runs out)...

you get a free camera. People said 'this is absurd'. Of course now, you get free cameras. Obviously there is no money in cameras, the only money is in film stock. All of those things we were very pleased with. The only thing that is yet to come about is that we'll go back to radio, which is the last thing that'll happen today. It was a little addition of mine because I prefer radio. Waves in space. So it was back and forth, back and forth... that's really all I can tell you. But I think it was certainly my intention to make a story if one could, about someone who had no bad. There is really no dark side to Thomas Newton, or to the creature. I mean there are moments when he becomes upset, depressed and dangerous looking, but he doesn't do anything. Of course the idea of the un-threatening alien - before Spielberg's creatures and all that, which was told in a fairytale kind of way - was the idea that if we get a chance then we'll pull the wings off flies. We'll dissect this creature and prove that he is evil, dangerous, bad. So that aspect I was very pleased with. There are very few films about a good man. Very few. **Which brings us onto Bowie's casting in the role.**

Yes, that came about because I had originally written the film to his music. We thought that he'd be a really good choice. I'd written the film listening to stuff like *Life On Mars*, because they were the current hits in 73, 74 whenever he made them. So of course everybody was listening to *Space Odyssey*, sorry *Space Oddity*! Now, then he did a television, *Monitor* I think, with Alan Yentob called *Cracked Actor*. I think Nic first approached him to do the music really. Which he was disinclined to do, well sort of, he was interested. And then he got persuaded to be in it. And what we would have done without him, in terms of casting, I don't know. We had other ideas, but nothing would have replaced him. Because we needed a name, and without the name, we couldn't get the money. There's no other role, so without him we would have been fucked.

I understand THE MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH was originally cut by twenty minutes. Why?

It was cut in America and then restored, simply because they got bored. They cut the television scene, can you imagine, the scene where he's watching twelve televisions. They thought that was dull. It wasn't cut by twenty minutes

because of any reason, but because that's a boring bit or that's a stupid bit or well, we don't understand what that bit means. It doesn't go anywhere. **THE MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH** is a film that went nowhere, it was actually *about* going nowhere. Like, you're here. You're not going anywhere, you're *here*. You're here until you die, and then that's it. Well that's not a very nice message, you can't really think like that because that's actually how our lives are. We are not going anywhere. Not just Thomas Jerome Newton, all of us. The thought of going back is basically nonsensical. Everybody thinks they come from somewhere else. Every child thinks its parents are somebody else's, they're an orphan in the forest, you know, these fantasies. Maturity means acceptance. You are where you are. And there is no more to it than that. Being where you are and going nowhere means that it changes your vision. You start to connect things differently. You realise that there is nowhere to go. You start to develop, branch out like a tree. So suddenly you begin to talk about the past, the past you weren't in, like history. Why do you learn history in school, it's not going to help you? Why are we learning other languages, what are we learning all these things for? Why are we going sideways, learning about other cultures at the same time? What are these people doing in the Sudan? Why are we bombing this factory? What is it for? We have to. Why? Because they've done a bad thing. Well, we don't know they've done a bad thing. In **THE MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH**, the guy comes back to him years later and says, 'you know, they've started to blow up the space station'. He says 'I don't know why people build these things, it's such a waste'. So suddenly, what was so essential once is now waste, like the Mars space probes and so on. That's what you learn when you know that there is nowhere to go. You're here, now look around. So when you look, of course you look at everything together, past present and future. You can run things backwards and forwards on video now. You could never run film back and forwards, on an editing suite you could. On DVD you can actually programme the scenes you like so there's no need to watch the rest. So you click like a regular CD. Play the best bits. Now that's a change of vision and that comes from knowing that we're not going anywhere. You are here. And in a way, that informed, what you called a style but what I would call a concept, or the narrative of **THE MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH**. It just went out, it didn't go up down, sideways. It just went out.

Very... existential.

Yes. Just being. I think it really worked. I saw it again on video last year and it's still not bad.

What are the origins of the stream of consciousness structure you adopted for your two collaborations with Nic Roeg?

To be honest, it was there already. I met Nic at the time of **PERFORMANCE**. He was cutting **PERFORMANCE**. He first came to see me about doing another project, which we didn't do, called 'The Judge And His Hangman' which I wrote a script for but we never made. We shared very similar views. Obviously **PERFORMANCE** was his first film, with Donald. So the first time we met he took me to a rough cut of **PERFORMANCE** which was three and half or maybe four hours long. So I watched this thing and we talked a lot about it. That was Nic's interest, cutting between connections. And it so happened that for me, who had not written a film that had been made, that I was not adept in that at all, but very adept in making connections if you like perhaps in a literary way, or a visual way, or whatever. So what we had between us was that my particular way of leaping about connections suited Nic's style. So there was a way of thinking that was very similar.

It's also very evident in your later novels, *Homme Fatale* and *Violent Silence*.

Yes I'm sure, although there isn't a cutting style in *Homme Fatale*, it looks like a very straightforward narrative. It's pretty consequential. It was the first book I wrote. It wasn't a matter of adapting the style. I think it's a way of thinking. I wouldn't like to call it a style, you could call it a style for Nic's films, but for me it's a way of thinking. The minute you think of one thing, a dozen other things come into your mind and then you select what is connected.

Sounds like Robbe-Grillet.

He had wanted **MARIENBAD** to be made somewhere else, I remember reading. I don't know whether it was in Turkey or somewhere. It wasn't his idea to shoot the film where it was finally shot. He didn't say so at the time, because he was very loyal [to Alain Renais], obviously without one you would not have the other, it was a brilliant partnership. I don't think any of the luxury and strange baroque, particularly German and Austrian baroque of Resnais was anything to do with Robbe-Grillet.

Didn't Renais also suppress a rape sequence in Robbe-Grillet's original script?

Quite possible. A Robbe-Grillet story without a rape



sequence is (laughs) like an empty sandwich. Resnais is very circumspect about sexuality. Even in **LA GUERRE EST FINIE...** which has a direct sexual theme he's very circumspect.

The characters of Ursula and Laura in both *Homme Fatale* and *Violent Silence* come across, at least physically, as a sort of hybrid of Louise Brooks and Sylvie Guillem!

(laughs) I think that comes from... I can't think of the right word... woman as model for something. Not necessarily manipulable but model for something. There are two aspects of femaleness that I'm interested in, a relationship which is not instinctively maternal or whatever one would say, one is nun or whore, that's not really it, it's the degree to which you can manipulate this or that woman to be what you want or allow her to manipulate you into what you want.

Which is what *Homme Fatale*, at least is all about.

Yes, exactly. So I think that's what men or some men want from women. I generalise, but that's what men want from women. They want to manipulate and be manipulated but they want the same thing. And one thing they want, but

can't have, because most of us are not equipped for it, is change. We're not good at that. It's not commitment, that's not it. It's the fear of change. Commitment would be fine provided it meant no change. But it's got this ugly side to it, a comic side too, that they'll start changing you. So it's really resistance to change. And the idea of how can you have power, whilst resisting change. You can't. It'll snap and that's true. You can't have power over somebody if you're not prepared to be changed. And that's really the game. In both stories it's like that. It's about resistance to change, essentially. A male resistance to change. Desire for it but resistance too. And that's really, at root, what it is. So what happens is a kind of cruelty. Very few stories involve men being changed by a woman. I mean, you get Anais Nin playing with that, but they kind of dodge it, they're so slight, well maybe not slight, but they're sort of anecdotes. I can't remember a book in which a man has been changed by a woman and gone off into her world. It's happened a lot, but in literature it doesn't happen at all. And I don't know why. And I still haven't done it so I'm just as cowardly as everyone else. But these stories are about the brink of that.

And the reason they are so sexually explicit is because everyone says 'Well that's not romantic' and people get put off by that, so I wanted to put that to the test because I don't think it's true. I think most men will in a way take what they can get and try and transform them. If there's an offer you take it.

What about VERTIGO?

VERTIGO is a special case because it depends on a very strange difference. In **VERTIGO** there is one aspect which is very unusual, which is a man who wants another man's wife, which is very lightly touched upon as far as the script goes, but is actually what it is. That is not the basic fodder of American cinema. A woman can perfectly well want another woman's husband because that's okay. Adrian Lyne does these films all the time. But a serious man of integrity wanting another man's wife is nuts. I think **VERTIGO** is predicated on a strange relationship. A lot has been said about the film but I don't think the film strikes a chord with everybody. I know people who are just not interested in **VERTIGO**, men and women, I don't know why, I don't get it.

***Homme Fatale* and *Violent Silence* are novels and not screenplays, but why did you set both stories firmly in the film world?**

Well I wanted to write books which were set in America, because I like Los Angeles. Inspiration? The people really. In the first case I wanted to do a story like a *noirish* James Cain story on one level but I couldn't get the central character right, but I based him on my agent, my then agent. I suddenly saw that's what he was, in other words he was always looking for something in people. In other words, he's not a detective he was essentially a salesman, but an intelligent salesman, in trouble, not luckily. So that struck me as probably the right man. So that's interesting, the office as described in the book, is exactly like it is for my agent, who was a friend and still is. I was also very keen on the idea of the resistance to killing your mother. That came from Bataille. In a screenplay from that, that was un-acceptable, I had to change it for an ex-wife or wife.

So what happened to it?

It was never filmed

Which is ironic, since both novels take advantage of the fantasies surrounding unfulfilled scripts!

That's the whole of my life really. For every one which is made, well, ten aren't. The thing about a novel is that, once

you've done it, it's there. The unfulfilled script is what I do all day!

The unfulfilled script in *Homme Fatale* is inspired by a series of sexually charged photographs, what were you thinking of there?

I was thinking of Helmut Newton. The idea of telling a story in photographs. And the sort of weird thing about the Zoetrope and the idea that film is just stills. And that actually it was a curious mistake, I do believe that. The invention of cinematography was a mistake. It should have gone straight to tape. There really shouldn't have been the idea of moving pictures.

But still, tape stores scans of frames, doesn't it?

No, because there are no images on tapes. They only become frames when you stop the tape, but with film they are actually frames before you stop the film. I've begun to think of cinema as an interlude.

Okay, but whilst the cognitive mechanisms that we use to put together the bits of information in a movie may operate in the same way for both film and video, you don't need to be a perceptual psychologist to notice a different texture or feel to film...

I have my doubts about that. But there is a different mechanism in film. For example, the first script I ever wrote, when I was your age, was about an epileptic who was stimulated by film, who had fits whilst watching films. He was doing some bad things and he finally got caught because he only went to see Fritz Lang movies. In other words, that's all he wanted to see. That would be an impossibility these days! Because of the flicker, the 24 frames, that has been known to stimulate epilepsy... I can see no reason why **PSYCHO** could not have been shot on video. You wouldn't have known the difference. Why films are not shot on video now... The reason for that, of course, is economic. Everybody has been trained. But everything is being transferred to disc, and with Avid and Lighthouse, there's no film, there's no negative. I think film is an interlude based on moving stills. It's got nothing to do with moving pictures. With the Mitchells, the big cameras they used to have, the idea of moving it in Murnau's **SUNRISE** is like God! No! it's like moving a piano! But now it's like the size of that tape recorder, even smaller. I think film is an interlude between still photographs and digital. This is the reason I think why film is so suffused with nostalgia, because it's already dead. If it ever existed at all, it's like one of those dreams, like stained glass windows.



▲ Roeg and Bowie on set



▲ Candy Clark and Bowie between takes.

▼ Mr Newton and the joys of life on Earth





from top. Isabelle Adjani, *POSSESSION*. Malgorzata Braunek in *DIABEL*; Adjani and lover in *POSSESSION*. Right: Andrzej Zulawski in 1972



Cinema Superactivity

Andrzej Zulawski interviewed by *Stephen Thrower & Daniel Bird*

"Whisper everybody can - go and shriek!" After a film career spanning nearly thirty years, Andrzej Zulawski shows no sign of letting up in his search for extremes. SZAMANKA, the first film he'd shot in his native Poland since THE SILVER GLOBE was curtailed in 1977, opened to hostile reviews in France and an outcry in Poland about his treatment of the female lead. Early in 1998, Daniel Bird and I went to Paris to interview Zulawski and see SZAMANKA for ourselves. It turned out to be his most exciting and outrageous since POSSESSION in 1981 - violent, erotic and crackling with mad, restless energy. Would the director prove to be as alarming and unpredictable as his films? In this extensive interview, Zulawski, a vigorous, alert artist with a true passion for cinema, discusses his career and his highly individual approach to film-making.

ST: I hear that the French critics hated SZAMANKA. What was the problem?

I don't know, they never wrote anything coherent enough to say to oneself 'maybe they have an argument, maybe we can think or talk' or whatever. One of the most influential papers we have here, *Liberation*, which is very pinky and very caviar, but it's not a stupid newspaper, at all, they just wrote that I should be shot with a tranquilizer gun and the whole film should be thrown down the drain! But without giving any argument. It's an extremely conservative culture now here in France, and they 'know' everything, they've 'organized' the world, you know. In a museum you know exactly who is a 'good' painter and who is not. They organize their world and they can't understand after this 250 years of organization they now have behind them, why the people in this country are so unhappy. Why are they so gloomy? Why is there so much hatred and just... plain sadness? If you stay in Paris for a week you become so... a heavy burden, I don't know what, falls on your shoulders and you feel...so responsible... for everything, and nothing works. It's idiotic, because things work, more or less, like everywhere, it's a rich country and they have the problems they've invented, so... They want to control. People in front of a TV set want to control the TV set, they want to control you if you walk in the street, they yell if you do something wrong at the wheel of your car, they want to control. And having control they are very unhappy! Because this is the way to get unhappiness, to control.

ST: Your films seem to embrace a certain amount of chaos. Do you think this is what rubs the critics up the wrong way?

Sure I think you must be right. I think, because I never thought about that idea, or about any film of mine afterwards. I just do it.

DB: What was the response to the film in Poland?

Oh it was quite the contrary. Well that's not totally true. Let's say that the Polish establishment was absolutely against the film, to the point that the distributor was so afraid that they started with two shows a day, at night in fact, they were afraid to show it during the day. After a week they started it in two cinemas, after another it was in seven, then it was in fourteen. It got a massive response from young people, so we've now had 400,000 viewers in Warsaw, which is immense. We've beaten all the Americans. I don't care about the numbers, I care about... if I thought that it was a film that was untrue - and this is the most difficult word in this whole discourse of mine, what is true? - but if this film were untrue, which means that people wouldn't go and see it, I'd be very miserable. But where truth hides in the cinema is so strange, so bizarre. It hides sometimes in the most incredibly stupid films. And sometimes in highly intelligent ones.

DB: One of my friends in Poland said she didn't like the film, but she said it was fascinating and she can't stop thinking about it. You said after the release of DIABEL that you'd rather have people irritated but take note of the film rather than...

But what do you mean by 'like'? Why the hell should she 'like'? She should be, in a way, moved or changed, in the best sense, or shaken or slightly disturbed, which is a victory to achieve that. But 'like' is a word that stinks of pink, of sweet, of, you know, what do you *mean* by like? And also you have so many likeable films in which people are really behaving like leeches, just to please somebody, anybody - I'd rather see a film I don't like, in a sense, but I love this feeling when I see something that is important to me. I go out of the cinema and I'm shaking, I don't know what happened... it's not drugs, it's not wine, it's just a film, and it has this tremendous power. Then I can say this is important. And I like this feeling more than the film!

ST: That's how I felt about POSSESSION the first time...

But which version, because you know what the Americans did? They bought the film from this stupid producer of mine and they rehashed the film.

ST: I've never seen the 89m American version. Have you?

No, I would never see it! Marie-Laure Reyre was a very rich woman married to a very rich banker and she wanted to be a producer. We have to find these kind of people - basically she's very nice by the way - to make these strange and bizarre films.

DB: Did she restrict the film in any way?

No she didn't understand the film so... people who think they understand something tend to be able to restrict it, but otherwise no. During the shooting of the film she was perfect, and the film was - I wouldn't say a big success in France but - quite a success which means that everyone was very happy. And then she was conned into some bad deal with some American idiots. I remember reading a critic in *The New York Times* who was intelligent enough and aware enough to write that they hope that the real version they saw in France would be released in the States, but it never happened.

ST: We understand that you filmed in French and in English. Is this true?

No, no, no, the original version is in English.

DB: I saw a version with Adjani speaking French...

Yes, of *POSSESSION*? Well there is a law in France which you might not be aware of. If a film is released on a screen, even one, in the original version, which is called v.o. here, then it has to be shown at the same time on another screen in a French version. Today, with the advent of TV it's not as rigid as it was. For instance *SZAMANKA* is only in Polish, because they don't pay attention any more, but at that time 15 years ago, we had to make a French version. Which is

alright because Adjani did it and it was of good quality.

DB: So when you actually shot the film, were any French sequences shot afterwards?

No we dubbed it. We never shot in French.

ST: Did Adjani dub herself, and Sam Neill?

Adjani yes, Sam Neill no. One of the reasons we shot in English was because Sam Neill cannot speak a word of French. Heinz Bennent could speak some French, bad French.

DB: I much preferred the English version. It seemed to suit that Adjani was struggling with English, in some of the sequences where she was struggling with words. Whereas with the French...

Yes you're right. But not only that. When we created *POSSESSION*, Adjani was nothing. She'd just blown her career and was living in a cheap apartment on the roofs, where maids live in France, with her kid and her husband. It was quite a good place because it was rented to her by Donald Sutherland so I don't think it was really squalor, but still. Nobody wanted her because she behaved so badly in the last film she did. For me, I'm not French... I don't care about the behavior, I can cope, I hope, with any behavior. For me she was just this fantastically talented actress - and very beautiful. I wanted her really strongly. We got her for the film for peanuts, it was a very good deal for the producers! But after the film when the word of mouth was spread that she was very good in it, and she behaved fantastically, she was on time, she was disciplined, so the new Adjani image was starting to be created. She immediately picked some new films and it was the rebirth of her career. But when we were doing the dubbing into French she was in the middle of this renaissance, everybody wanted her, she was beautiful she was nice she was great, she was perfect. And then when she saw *POSSESSION* - because she never saw the dailies during the shooting, she never wanted to, I don't know why exactly. Because I rather like actresses to see what they are doing, it's for me so simple... you know, *look at yourself... and think!* She never wanted. It wasn't coquettishness, I think she was a bit afraid of this very black character.

ST: It's a frightening role!

Yes, when she saw the film finished she did an amazing thing, she locked herself in a bathroom and she committed suicide! But it's Adjani, it's not real. She committed suicide with a Gillette G2, you know, you can cut zero-zero-one millimetre of your skin with that, these twin blade things, it's impossible! It was only to show she was suffering so much having seen herself and she said to me this

memorable sentence. 'You don't have the right to put the camera in this way because it looks inside one's soul' - and her soul is dark, I think, and she knows it. And it was I think a very sincere reaction. She loves herself so therefore she will never commit suicide! But it was a way of showing her profound shock at having done that role. And the new films she picked were French comedies, and she was absolutely pink and charming. When she started to dub the film, (*Zulawski mockingly adopts little girl voice*) she started to talk with this childish voice and be ab-so-lutely char-ming, and she was thinking that if she speaks like that everything will be forgiven... and she was just an idiot! And I was struggling and fighting and we hated each other at that point, and I was really mad at her. And I said to her, 'Look, if you continue for five minutes with this little game, I just take another actress, I have the right. It's in the contract'. And then she tried to cheat with it, you know... therefore the French version is softer and, you know, too easy. But it's very much her character.

DB: Adjani described you as a "magician". How do you actually persuade people to act in apparently out-of-control ways as in POSSESSION or L'AMOUR BRAQUE?

I hope you are very aware that I will never answer this question! Because it's like asking a shoemaker how the hell he makes his shoes. I hope I'm not impolite but you ask me for the basis of my trade. I'm 56 now and I've spent 25 years to understand it, to go after it, and so you can imagine I wouldn't say it in a couple of sentences in an interview, it's useless.

ST: Rather than ask you to explain what it is, can we ask about a component of the way you work? Do you do multiple takes or do you aim to catch it in one or two?

I think the basis of the whole thing is - and it sounds really didactic and idiotic but it's really true - you have to like them. And they have to feel after a couple of days that whatever they will do listening to you, it will never turn against them. Because it's a very, very dangerous *metier*, acting. You can be ridiculous in half a second. It's frightening. And they know it. But they don't know it about themselves, they know it by examples. They see it all over in the history of cinema. So they are extremely... like cats when they come in, even if they accepted the film, they are prudent, they want to see. But at the same time it's not on an intellectual level, there are very few intellectual actors. They feel that *you* know that in order for your film to be good and interesting they have to be very good. They are onscreen, I'm not onscreen. If they understand that whatever they do

they can turn to you and say 'How was it' and if it was bad it won't go in the movie, they are never tricked or trapped, they go ahead. But in order to have that you have to pick them right. In Paris you have 10,000 people, 10,000, I'm not joking, they write on their National Identity Card 'professional actor'. But they work maybe one day every ten years as actors! The difficult thing is to pick the real ones. It's only with them that you can get to the point we were talking about. Because if it's a phony, or if he or she is someone who knows *exactly* how to act because she went through this school, it's desperate, there's no way. With the real ones you talk, you address, you communicate with a sphere of being, a strata of being, a point, nobody else has except actors. It's sometimes incoherent. I always say to my actors at the start of a film, sometimes they don't believe me, after two or three weeks we won't talk. It'll be sign language. I'm there to be the first viewer. If it's very good I cry because I'm so...oh... overwhelmed, by the beauty, the sheer beauty, it's not because it's sentimental, it's because it's beautiful. The second thing is to show them, persuade them, that the camera is their only ally, they have to seduce it. This object is not a dead thing with the metal and the lenses, it's a very mysteriously alive being.

ST: Because of the pace and the aggression and this incredible momentum that your films have, it's very hard to imagine them on paper, and to imagine that somehow they go from the paper to the screen intact; do you encourage actors to improvise?

It's a very good question, it's a complicated question because it deals with filmmaking in general. I think that the films go intact, except that there is a mysterious translation because if the script would be such a great job of literature you should publish it as a book. But no-one could tell me that I've used the producer by writing A and filming B. You have to know how to read scripts, it's a blueprint. I hate improvisation and I've never had the time and the money to do that. I had always in all my films extremely tight schedules, so for instance I'm two hours before the crew on the set every day. I rethink the purpose of our meeting here and in the next two hours a hundred people will come and ask me what are we doing. And if you want to shoot your film on schedule, on time and with reasonable efficiency, you have to know that the camera will be here, here, here and here. Because otherwise the guy has to change the lights all the time, you'll have hours lost and you will never finish the film. Of course with the actors and technicians we've talked,

we've talked for weeks, for months beforehand. But, it's like you discuss with your wife that you want a kid, OK? Then you have the kid... on time... you've even chosen his astrological sign, you did it nine months before. But the kid has the right to live, he's alive, and you have to observe him, you have to like him for what he is, you've chosen this woman, this is your kid. So during the shooting if an actor is just passive and just doing what he's told to do it's terrible, because it means he's not interested in the part. He's not thinking, he's not putting his energy into this part of the common creation. So I love it when they say suddenly - this is a very rough example - oh I was supposed to cry - I will laugh. I was supposed to be very agitated, I will be totally still. Perfect! If he tells me why. If he tells me intellectually why, it doesn't work. If it comes from deep down, the guts, the inside, it's perfect. This is the balance between the script and what's fresh, what's new and surprising. You know, I never believed when Hitchcock said that he never looks in the camera because the film is done before, I never believed him for a moment. Because I think he was always surprised when his choices were good, he was always surprised with Ingrid Bergman or Cary Grant. I think he was never surprised by Tippi Hedren, she was nought as an actress, zero-zero. You know your construction, you know the goal, what is the meaning, what do you want to say through that and how do you want to say it. For me every film has a subtle language which the viewer cannot see, hopefully never sees. There are films where the *mise en scène*, where the camera goes round. I've made films in which the camera just cuts across, films in which the camera floats (makes snake-like hand gesture). It depends on the script, what is it about?

ST: I'm interested in your use of camera, because you seem not to use Steadicam. You seem to prefer dolly shots and tracking shots.

In *SZAMANKA*, for the first time in my life I had enough money to use Steadicam. Half of it is Steadicam but you can't see it.

ST: Because it's not being used in that horrible aimless way...

Exactly. It's simply that... Look, in the history of cinema you have only two ways - in my mind, I'm not a doctor of cinema! - of directing a movie. One is horizontally. It springs from the fact that the cinema is a bizarre technical invention which was immediately applied to theatre. Because even the first films where the worker girls come out of the factory, Lumière, is like theatre. Camera's in front, they come from

the backstage, and they split left and right and that's it. This is horizontal. Eventually the camera could follow left or right on a track. If you shoot like that you have to make a shot-contra-shot, where people talk. It's the only way to break this horizontal. But it's immobile and just for a face. It's the most inept kind of *mise-en-scène* or directoral effort ever. Then you have the second one in which you ask your camera to go in, it's vertical, it goes in the innards of the film, it penetrates. Technically this is much more difficult because cameras were immobile or only on tracks. Therefore you couldn't make a really long track or you'd see the rails. So I use in most of my films for this a hand-held camera, held by a friend of mine, a guy who has this absolute fluid style. It goes down the stairs like in *POSSESSION*. It's so dangerous, it's risky, you tremble in the slightest and... it's just badly done. So the invention of Steadicam is wonderful because the whole problem is not there any more. But you have to use it specifically, not as it's used in most TV, American films, like a drunken boat floating. Nothing of technique should be allowed to play first violin, you use it.

ST: You're not afraid to use a very mobile camera, but perhaps because the actors are encouraged to pitch their performances at such an aggressive level they balance the technical extremity?

Yeah, you know it stems from the simple fact that I'm very bored when I go to the movies most of the time, I'm really bored. I think it is an incredible chance to say something in two hours, but I know also that maybe the next chance to do it will be in five years! So it's a kind of condensation of everything. Those same actors you can see being slow... and reflective... are in my films rather aggressive (laughs). The stories are aggressive, the way of seeing the world is aggressive. Because I think the world is so aggressive.

ST: One thing that is interesting, and disappointing, about the responses to your films in the English-speaking world is that you've been 'accused' of... hysteria...

(simultaneously) ...hysteria, I love this word (laughs). I know it by heart now, absolutely.

ST: It's not a criticism I'd make, but how do you respond to this... 'judgement'?

I don't exactly know. They amalgamate together this superactivity, this energy, this shrieking quality which for me is a quality. You have to know how to do it. Whisper, everybody can... go and shriek. It's much more difficult, if you're civilised! (laughs) They put this one word on it, call it hysteria, and I think by default it shows what's lacking in them. I

mean they should shriek some times, they should yell, or run or do something. First of all they should stop being critics and go and make a film. Because it's like flies; there's your big shit and you have all those flies feeding and eating and being paid for that. Which is a very curious thing. I was a critic when I was young as you are, and I think it's perfectly normal to go through it at this stage. But if you still do it at fifty! Oh-oh, something's deeply wrong! I joke, but in fact I have no answer to that. The only reaction I have is to say 'Look, I stopped going to the movies because of you'. You in general, big you, because you've subdued cinema. You've made something terrible with cinema. This is an instrument of mega force, to go into you, to change you, shape you. What use have you put it to? To please, to amuse - alright why not? But why do you exclude this part which is the heart of the whole thing. To shake, to break the barriers, to show you something you couldn't imagine possible. I think that directors are mostly responsible for that, they have no ethics, no morals, they will do anything in order to have the money. When the air pilots want more money, whatever, they stop flying. The money people are screwed because they can't fly. The producers cannot shoot films, most of them, because they are not directors. If the directors had any semblance of decency they would make a league of directors saying there is a level beyond which we won't go. Because we have to educate... the reason people are so stupid is partly our fault.

ST: If I can interject with something that may annoy you... Andrei Tarkovsky once said "When I look at POSSESSION all I see is money, money, money"!

Yes; but he was very badly informed! (laughs) I knew him from Russia, he wanted me to play Jesus Christ being crucified in the snow in one of his films, I was very young, it was before my films. I admired the guy very much. He was just misinformed because he came to the West having absolutely outlandish ideas about things. So for him **POSSESSION**, which is really an anti-establishment film! - was the money film, you know, and he was just plain wrong. It doesn't really mean anything to me because I still think **ANDREI RUBLEV** is a masterpiece and some of his films are just fantastic. If I'd have known that twenty years ago I'd have phoned him and said, 'Listen Andrei, I have no money, so please stop blah-blahing! Because they give you much more money for your Italian stupid film, which I don't really like, than I ever got for **POSSESSION**, so stop it!' I think he was... misinformed but of a pure heart, so... he was a good guy.

DB: In POSSESSION, where Adjani is addressing the camera, she's struggling and can't find words to articulate how she's feeling - and in MES NUTS SONT PLUS BELLES QUE VOS JOURS the lead character's faculties of language are gradually disintegrating. Do you think, working in French, Polish, English, that language is a significant factor in your work? Can you actually express things in one language which you can't in others?

Language is everything. Language is civilisation, it is difference. I don't know exactly whether people dream in images or in language. Or did they start to dream in images because they developed language? I don't know, I think it's basic. On my scale of importance, literature - which is language put to use telling stories - is more important than cinema, cinema is behind. And it's dragging behind more and more. There was a moment say in the 1920s and 30s, in which you couldn't say so because it was impossible to write these films. Or to film this literature that was written at the same time, it was perfectly balanced I guess. But today no. You still have to write a script to convince some producer to give you money to do this. You still have these words between you and the screen. With **MES NUTS** with Dutronc, I did it because I was really shocked by the fact that most of the films that are meant to be intelligent that I see are blah-blah films. Nothing happens, they talk. So I wanted to push this up to an absurd point, in which even the talk dissolves into a nightmare of... nonreason, whatever... and of cinema, of real cinema. Because for cinema, language or literature is only a go-between. Between the money and the screen.

ST: Can we talk a little about the use of colour in *Possession*?

Well I've talked about it so many times years ago it would be like rehashing. Each film has a theory of colour, and its never the same. **POSSESSION**, which I've talked about many times is blue and yellow. In most theories of colour blue is the colour of rejection of the heart and yellow is the colour of passion, the realm of the senses... Goethe said the same, and the Sufis. And then blue and yellow are the colours of Berlin, the street signs and the Underground, so it was fitting. And what unites blue and yellow is a sort of greyish blue, which is the colour of the stones in Berlin. So we painted the apartments and all that, we always do that on every film. And red appeared only as blood. So it's simple, I hope its not over-intellectual onscreen.

DB: So do you think colour has not only a symbolic property but also a psychological process which affects you?

Yes, absolutely, because the symbolic comes from the fact that you observe the way it affects you, so the symbolic aspect is the conclusion, but the impact is physiological and psychological, yellow acts on your mind in a certain way. If I made a film in Asia, remember white is the colour of widowhood, bereavement, death. Yellow is a sacred colour, orange too in most parts of Asia. Therefore when we see a Japanese film or a Chinese film or one from Hong Kong we should be aware of that. But it's because colours act in a certain way on our inner eye.

DB: Many people have read symbols into POSSESSION, drawing on Jung and certain religious ideas. Do you think the psychological process that leads to arriving at these symbols is the same as with colour?

I hope so, I do hope so, but then it becomes much more murky and muddled, because it depends on your education. What is the net you have to catch, it can be very different from person to person. You asked me earlier about my methods with actors. Well... (long pause)... it's impossible to forget that acting is religious, basically. The first actor is the shaman acting in front of his flock. A mass is a theatrical play with symbolism and gestures. We act because we are religious beasts. The proof is, well I went several times to Haiti, I was very interested in the experiments of Grotowski, a very famous, avant-garde Polish director, working there for thirty years. The trance phenomenon. What is it? Nobody knows. Does it exist? Yes. I can put you into a trance, in about twenty minutes, and you won't know what you'll be doing. So it's profoundly human, it's in you, but if you refuse that basic darkness, psychological darkness, in which you can walk over fire or pierce yourself with a sword and nothing happens to you, if you don't admit it, you don't understand anything about acting, about the performing arts, at all. I like pushing actors to the border of this, sometimes. I've made exercises with them before, especially with girls because they are so blocked by civilisation, you have to open them in a way - I'm not joking - for their own good. You have to open them, but not with blah blah Freudianism, I don't believe in that word...

ST: (laughs) We suspected as much!

DB: Steve thought the dead dog scene in POSSESSION was lampooning Freud.

Yes, yes exactly. But I know that without words you can cure not everything but most of what Freud was attempting with words, you can do it by physical things. It's true that everything you do, everything you think, all your behaviour will

project itself and establish itself in your body. It's enough to look at a girl walking, you will know what is her problem. Everybody has a problem. Childhood, bad loves, bad job, it shows if something's wrong. So in order to open my actors, I have an assistant I love, who organizes this with me, and we devise little programs, 3,4,5 days, so they go into deep trance. We never talk about it, they always ask 'What happened', we say 'Nothing'.

ST: It's interesting to look at the subway scene in POSSESSION with regard to what you're saying about trance states. There's a frightening moment when it seems there's a thud of Adjani's head hitting the wall, as if...

Yes, she banged her head - it's a real one. There's an echo, you know, that amplifies, but nevertheless... She never felt anything because she went through these exercises in trance before the film, and she used it. Yet she used it in a very conscious way, she always knew what she was doing. It's impossible to hurt yourself when you go into this.

ST: I understand this scene was cut from an original take of nearly ten minutes.

I don't remember... 10 minutes certainly not, no, I wouldn't say so, but it was quite long.

ST: Your films look quite expensive and yet they are not distributed much to the lucrative English-speaking markets. Are you under pressure to enter that market? How do you manage to work within the distribution pattern you have?

First of all, to enlarge the question, I would never make an underground film or a marginal film. I don't like to watch these films. I think there's a main struggle going on in our culture, on this Earth. It's only when you pretend to be 'mainstream' and then you put your bag of dynamite - little bag - and make a boom, an explosion, that something changes. To my mind this is the only possibility of transgression, which is the rule of how all progress works. So I was always in this mainstream financing thing which I thought was very important. Two thirds of my films were reasonably big money makers. I always try to make a film that is really mine, then an adaptation, then one of mine, etc. Because I know the films which are adaptations will be the bigger money-makers. They allow me to make a film after, so it's a strategy, a little strategy. And also, these films, except one (*LA NOTE BLEUE*, 1991) have made money. Enough to put me in a very strange position. I'm not begging for money to make my next film. They are always based on a very tight schedule, a very precise way of filming, with a kind of

strange calculation about how much this film can make back for the producers - who are innocent, they may be stupid but they are innocent - so this balance is difficult. I missed it once when I made my film of Chopin which was full of Polish themes - it didn't work in France, they don't give a shit. But remember, 99 out of 100 French films never go abroad. It's not just my case, it's a national case. England doesn't exist. It's a miracle if a French film goes to three cinemas in New York. It's a big civilisation, 60 million people, then they have Belgium, Italy, Switzerland, Canada, it's enough for them - and with this system they are producing 170 films a year. How many in England?

ST: Very much fewer!

But you have the American market - so who's wrong? They don't care. For instance, **POSSESSION** did well, but it would do even better if I'd shot it in Paris in French.

ST: But American culture is so powerful. Does it sometimes bother you that you don't get to detonate your 'bag of dynamite' in the American market?

No, because I love American cinema, I think it's the best on Earth, so I don't accept this American imperialism theory. An example - cinema in Poland is absolutely dominated by the Americans. The same day a film is released in America it is released in Poland. Because, out of the countries of Europe, we are the most dynamic, it's a country that is literally exploding, it's incredible. So we have an American cinema market and producers are very frightened by that. They said to me 'Don't do Polish films they haven't got a chance'. And I said 'Oh yes? Well let's see'. So we made **SZAMANKA** (with private money not with state money like my colleagues are still trying to do). And we've beaten every American film on the market. Because it's something which is of real interest to the people in the street. It's so simple; cinema is for the poor, it's not for the rich!

DB: It's now freer but more expensive to make films in the Czech Republic/Slovakia. Is it the same in Poland?

For us it's a big question. It's not true it's too expensive in the Czech Republic and Poland, they are still churning out films. Last year in Poland they made 35 films. But you can't ever see them; first of all they are so bad no distributor will take them. These people are still living as if in the ancient system where if you were obedient to the state you got your money, you made your film so who cares how it does. There were no American films so these would be seen if anyone wanted to go to the cinema. There was nothing else. There are 14 young Polish DoPs working in America today, 14,

because Polish DoPs are the best in the world. They're 28-35, young men. But why don't you have one Polish director over there? It's the same school, the same culture, the same background. It's because they don't want to understand - as I said - cinema is for poor people, for the young and poor people. If you don't go and live like them, if you don't understand what's going on in the street, what kind of films do you want to make, for whom? You can do it in France, for the, you know, 'pink' bourgeoisie, who say 'This is an absolutely exquisite film' - a film nobody wants to see in fact. I'm not joking, we need Charlie Chaplin today in this country or Czechoslovakia, we need Buster Keaton. But we don't need intellectuals. A very simple TV film **KOLYA** won the Oscar this year. It's not much, but it's comprehensible, you can understand it on a very basic level, it's human. Just as a gory film can be human in a bizarre way. When we're talking about where's the truth in cinema, there's no genre that has the exclusive truth, not at all. For instance, when I see **THE FISHER KING** by Terry Gilliam - ugh! - I don't believe for a second anything I see on the screen, therefore I don't enjoy. Whereas when I see **THE TEXAS CHAIN SAW MASSACRE** I believe so much I'm under my seat I'm so frightened! Therefore there is truth. If you had a Martian friend coming to Earth you would show him the spectrum of what we are here, you would show him this film among the ten, let's say.

ST: Sadly Tobe Hooper seems to have lost whatever it was he had, it's evaporated. Whereas with your SZAMANKA - you've been making movies for 27 years but SZAMANKA felt like (laughs) the first time!

I've said several times - it's not a coquettish thing! - it's a first film again. This feeling is fantastic. But at the same time the notion of the auteur comes from repetition. I would love, the day I die, if someone would just glue the films one after the other.

ST: Can we talk a bit about DIABEL? What was the problem the Polish authorities had with it? I understand they objected to its 'cruelty'?

It was stopped for 18 years. Well, that was the official blah-blah. At that time, 1971 - not long after 1968 - a tragedy happened in Poland in this very repressive and bloody regime. A part of the Communist establishment wanted to seize power. In order to do this they devised a very clever trick. They provoked youth - innocent, naive university youth especially - to start a series of protests on the streets against censorship, lack of freedom. They did it on

purpose. Then the Communists turned to the Russians, the landlords, saying 'this government of Poland cannot control the population. So you have to fire them and take us because we know how to deal with them'. To show this - because they were from the police, what you'd call the KGB Polish branch - they organised a savage repression of the Polish young people, in March 1968. And in May 1968 in France, to this day they talk of their French revolution; they burned a car - one... Anyway, they destroyed the university education system and this generation of young people who were trapped into this protest went into oblivion, they are nothing today, they were never educated, they went to jail etc. So I wanted to tell this story but obviously I couldn't say it with the Polish government's money. So I put it under the masks and costumes of the 18th Century, when several tragedies annihilated Poland and the situation was about the same. It's the story of a police provocateur who infiltrates a group of young people preparing something patriotic and beautiful and who just destroys the whole thing. At the end you see that he's The Devil, The Beast. When they saw the film they called the Minister of Culture in the Soviet Union at the time; she came from Moscow to view the film. They said to her, 'We suspect that this is something not really about the 18th Century but we are not so sure' (laughs). They even liked the film but it was so politically dangerous for them. She saw the film, and being a good Soviet Russian she said, 'Oh goodness, this is terrible, lock up the film, kill the guy!' (laughs). That was the story. For 18 years the film was like a legend, in jail, like a person. When they eventually released it after 18 years - this is my luck - 'Solidarity' started to grab power. The most important factor in Polish politics at that time was the Church, and my films are not for church-goers! They said 'This is absolutely blasphemous, it's anti-Catholic' - which in fact it is, I am not a Catholic - and 'Oh no, please stop it!' So they stopped it again! It's a good film - I think.

DB: Is there such a thing as a visual language, and would you say the visual element predominates in your work?

I hope so, because cinema is eyes really, image. Yes I do think so. I was in a big quarrel with my colleagues in Poland for many years because they thought that you have to say things... (becomes very animated, tapping the table for emphasis) - If Ken Loach, of *KES*, *CARLA'S SONG*, once in his lifetime, could put a camera in the right spot instead of the wrong spot, he'd be the best director on Earth, because

he has everything else. The heart, the naiveté, the simplicity, the knowledge of how people live. Everything; except he thinks he is making documentary films. He doesn't understand the camera at all. When I see his films I'm just eating my fingers because this guy has everything except that, except the image.

ST: It's a puritan thing, I think. He mistrusts the image.

CARLA'S SONG is a flagrant example of stupid political thinking. Yet still, there's a heart beating in this film - little heart beating, a rabbit's heart. Here are these two characters, actors. But as he thinks it is absolutely immoral to go and look in the faces, he puts his camera in the corridor! Everybody is in profile, like an ancient Egyptian drawing.

ST: Or like the map of different continents (laughs).

Yes, it's crazy. He can move the camera, but no he won't do that, he doesn't exist with his camera.

ST: It's a false position anyway, a director pretending not to exist...

Exactly. And I had the same argument with my Polish colleagues. They don't care about the language of the image. Very often, I'm in front of the TV set and I switch off the sound for an hour or two, just to see images.

ST: You have that great scene in LA FEMME PUBLIQUE where the TV is tuned to static and covered in newspaper. Yes, exactly, just a little joke about that.

ST: How did LA FEMME PUBLIQUE do in general?

Extremely well, a big success, huge amounts of money and it propelled Valerie Kaprisky to stardom in five minutes.

ST: I'm interested in the music in that film. You use it in a very unusual way to accompany those infamous scenes of Kaprisky dancing. She's dancing naked in this very strenuous, aggressive, aerobic way, and the music is this sort of (laughs) 'March of the Elephants'!

[a rather wicked chuckle?] Yes, yes, but you know what we did? Because it would be impossible to dance on that, because people have ears. So she danced to *Let's Dance*, Bowie's song, which is great. Then we took it away and put on this mish-mash of - ugh - you know, on purpose. But if we'd put that on for her she couldn't dance, she had to dance to better music. But the cultural commentary is better with this music.

ST: It's very uncomfortable to watch. She's exposing herself so much...

Yes, but I wanted to show she's so eager, even in this shitty job, she's so physically alive, that she's so much better than anything surrounding her. It was the only way, so that it's

not David Bowie that's good, she's good. So maybe it was a bit tricky.

DB: POSSESSION reminded me of Bataille, particularly 'Madame Edwarda'. Your book *Bluebeard* was compared in the French edition to Bataille's writing. Have you any interest in him?

I hope it's not true! There's a whole intellectual movement in French culture that goes back to pre-revolutionary days, to De Sade, then on to Artaud, Bataille and some of the Surrealists, which I don't feel anything in common with. Which doesn't mean... I think there's a pond, and from different sides we've put our noses into it.

(The tape runs out and conversation turns to Zulawski's film L'IMPORTANT C'EST D'AIMER, which features a simulated porno-film shoot)

ST: I'm reminded of a story by one of my favourite French writers, Jean Baudrillard...

(Sighs) Maybe he is better in English than in French.

ST: He tells a story: during the making of a porno film an actress goes through all the required motions with the same blank expression. Her indifference is seductive. Half way through the revelries a man leans over and asks 'What are you doing after the orgy?'

(Laughs) Nice, but you know what burst the bubble, the worst part of making a porno film is the smell, it stinks.

ST: Is it the lights?

Exactly. I went to a set to see, because it's interesting

ST: In L'IMPORTANT C'EST D'AIMER...

We had a sequence, yes, it was terrible, we were hidden behind a glass screen and it stinks. So where is the intellectual theory? It just stinks.

DB: What is your opinion of Walerian Borowczyk's work?

Borowczyk? Oh, he lost himself, I think, it's a pity because he was quite a talent. First of all he was an extremely gifted painter, the films he made with Jan Lenica were pure sheer joy, I love that. And then when he started to make films, well.. he made one very good film, he shot it in Poland...

DB: DZIEJE GRZECU...

Yes, DZIEJE GRZECU, that's a good film.

DB: Another good film based on a bad book.

Exactly, exactly. It's a good film, for me. And then whatever he did afterwards was trying to recoup this audience and - he's disappeared hasn't he?

DB: What happened to the project that involved Nastassja Kinski throwing back one of your scripts, describing it as pornographic?

It's a film we never did because of her. It was called 'The Invincible' and I love this story and I think she is a perfectly charming, wonderful girl, gracious... and I think she is stupid and her career proves that she is stupid, making every wrong choice a girl can make. This is one of the projects I most regret not making. Now it is too late.

DB: Did her father live up to his reputation on the set of L'IMPORTANT C'EST D'AIMER?

At that time he was worth nothing. Nobody wanted him. He was thrown out of Rome, he had no money, he went to live in a hotel without water, without a loo in St Michel and he was *(makes desperate panting impression)* like this to play the part, and in order for him to play this part, I had to - because it was a co-production with Germany and France - take this girl. It's a long story, I won't repeat it, but I took a girl who was just fucking with two German producers and I said 'Alright, I will take her on, but you must allow me to take Klaus Kinski', and they said 'Of course, yes, please' because nobody wanted him, and I shot, like fifty scenes with the girl, and she is not onscreen. And then I wrote a letter to the producers, 'Never blackmail a director, you're fucked from the beginning'. Kinski was perfect, he was just a gentleman, well behaved and a very good actor. He wanted so much to act, and this film made him the star of Werner Herzog's films and whatever. But he was very bitter and mean. When he wrote his book about himself, he said the worst things about me, he said that I am a little priest and moralist and he hated me, but we were friends for ten years afterwards so he was just lying, he wanted to have this Paganini, you know, an aura about him, the devil.

ST: Do you find that the extreme states that you conjure in your films ever overlap into reality?

No, on the contrary. These states as you say have this huge healing virtue to exhaust problems.

ST: Exhaust rather than cure?

Yes, so therefore after the scenes actresses are like someone who has just run the fastest hundred yards ever, and they collapse and then they ask what happened and they are so happy when they see that they have beaten the record. But it doesn't pile on the frustration, on the contrary, it's like he voodoo thing, you know, it just evacuates.

ST: Have you seen Lars Von Trier's THE KINGDOM?

No, I saw EUROPA which I hated, I couldn't see a thing it was so black. I saw the last one which was very, very interesting.

DB: BREAKING THE WAVES?

AZ: Yes very interesting, and you know, for one simple reason; it is one of the most idiotic stories that I have come across on the screen, but he found, because he is a real director, such a style of filming, the only unique style to make the story spring to life and become not only possible but gripping, film in another way, the whole fantasy of this thing which has just collapsed into vast space.

DB: Were you surprised when Dario Argento declared *POSSESSION* as one of his favourite films?

I was very happy with that for many years, but when I was the president of a jury at a festival, I saw his last film, and I would love him not to say such things after that film!

ST: THE STENDHAL SYNDROME?

Oh God, it was really terrible, it's pretentious and it's bad and she (Asia Argento)'s bad and everything is bad... for me.

ST: Which Argento films did you like?

AZ: The first five, six, seven.

DB: What is your opinion of David Lynch and in particular his last film *LOST HIGHWAY*?

A very complicated question, very complicated. I have never actually liked anything he has done, but I think I like the person who is making these films, I would love to have dinner with him and talk, but I found no film of his satisfying, and some are really bad, like *DUNE* which is really bad, terrible, terrible film, and I can't stand *TWIN PEAKS* because he wants so much to be 'David Lynch' that it overflows.

ST: Have you seen *LOST HIGHWAY*?

No, is it good?

ST: I thought it was astonishing. It's seems as if he is sick of people expecting him to play the clown of surrealism. The first 45 minutes is minimalist, incredibly bleak and tense.

Oh good. I'd like to see it, he is still one of the greatest talents ever, this guy.

ST: He does something in *LOST HIGHWAY*, that again reminded me of *POSSESSION*. He presents you with an impossible moment in the middle of it and the biggest headache of the film is trying to work out how such an event could be real. The existence of the monster in *POSSESSION* really seems to trouble people.

Yes, I think you're right. My 'limitation' lets say, which is a limitation I gladly except, which we were talking about all along this interview is that I think this is cinema and for me cinema is 'show them' - it is as stupid as that. When I wrote *POSSESSION* as a script I gave it to a dear friend who is a Polish critic, he was president of the critics' FIFA organisa-

tion. He wrote so many scripts and was a very honest, good, thoughtful guy and I gave him the script and said 'tell me what you think'. And he said to me 'You should never show the monster, you should always guess', you know, a shadow or something, she goes in, you never see it because it is impossible, he said, it's impossible. All right, but this is the reason I am making a film! Because otherwise, write or tell it but don't film. And I think my limitation and I think my glory is that I will show anything. Because this is cinema, and I will never hide, a door will never close at the right moment, a light will never go out. If you invent it, think it, then find a way to show it, because I come from a rather intellectual and aristocratic family and I think that the humility of cinema is to show things, and this is, as I repeat, the glory of it, otherwise do something else.

ST: It's an incredibly powerful drive to do that, one which your films pursue through the urge to make actors produce something which others would prefer to leave invisible, to the point where you actually discussed with Adjani her vomiting; you can talk about madness, and the possibility of a religious answer, but that's talk talk talk, but there comes a point when that sickness...

Show it and do it. Therefore I tend to carefully watch directors who use large lenses because then you have to direct what you see over there, you have to control this reflection of the light here, and your face, and this and that, you have to know it. The American way comes from a TV way of filming, if you use a long lens and you pick a selection of the things you can see, you don't have to make these complicated moves like on a chess board. The directors who can direct are so few now, the camera directs for them.

DB: One review of *POSSESSION* which perhaps typifies its reception in England said that it was an 'indigestible wedge of psychology'. This was meant in a negative way but it's interesting, the use of the word 'indigestible'; whilst many reviewers are eager to acknowledge a sub-text, very few if any elaborate upon it, simply labelling the film pretentious. After I watched *POSSESSION* I felt incredibly drained emotionally. However I could not arrive at a reason why I felt that way. I get the impression that part of your creative process is trying to 'understand' what you are creating. Are your films meant to be understood, or are they meant to be felt?

Good question. I'll try to answer that. *POSSESSION* is essentially a very true-to-life autobiographical story. As I said even the kitchen dialogue is remembered and

transcribed. What's untrue is the monster, alright. And it's because... For instance, I saw Bergman's film **SCENES FROM A MARRIAGE** - its very good, but bizarrely unfinished, unsatisfactory by the end, inconclusive. Which means that someone who sticks so true to reality can not draw a conclusion. If a conclusion could be drawn we would never be divorced. We would be so happy in our marriages, our couples whatever. We'd know the formula. We don't know the formula. Therefore Bergman stops. In my mind at the point you stop you still want to say something, you go into the fairy tale thing. When you tell a story to a kid it always starts with two little kids in the woods but it finishes with a very bad fairy who's trying to eat them and lock them up etc. So it goes into a realm of thinking which doesn't exist on a realistic level. But who produces this realm of thinking? We do, so it exists in our heads with other things. It's not the Martians who came to tell us that there is another level of thinking. We produce it naturally, it is the level of a fairy tale and **POSSESSION** is a fairy tale for adults. Can you draw a conclusion from any fairy tale you know? It's impossible and in this fairy tales are honest. You cannot. When you draw a conclusion like Freud did - everything is sexual - it's false, untrue. With Marx, everything is class struggle. No conclusion is drawn, no simple conclusion is drawn therefore don't do it. Therefore tell the fairy tale without the moral at the end. The moral is in you, or you fabricate or engage a mechanism in order to think about it; is there a moral? How can there be a moral? Should there be a moral or not? It depends on you. And everything I have made has exactly the same mechanism but everything I have made is also I think a common line of thinking, which is, alright, in your life you go, like, through a tunnel of darkness, because there is a light at the end. It's a very small point of light a very tiny, tiny thing. But if there wasn't this point of light and I am talking like the rabbit in the Walt Disney movie you know, you would not walk at all, you would just lie down and die. And this simple, less than basic, really moronic way of thinking about us here... it is, I think, the only strength I have to make movies. All the rest is images, the eye's perceptions etc. But this string which is down there at the bottom of it is that. I don't know what kind of light there is but there is one really. And it is certainly not religious and it is certainly not moralistic, but there is one.

ST: Is it self projected, like pulling oneself up by one's bootlaces?

Out of the mud? No, I think it pre-exists.

ST: That relates to **SZAMANKA** - I read a few months ago about the discovery of an ancient corpse of a shamanic figure. I don't know whether this fed into your script but it was presumed to be a shaman because sperm was found up his ass.

Yes, that was put in the script, but in Poland you have from 1945 four or five discoveries like this, not as well preserved as in the glaciers of the Alps. But what really sprung me to life was a Jim Harrison story, do you know Jim Harrison? He is a very good American writer and they made a bad film out of his very good story **LEGENDS OF THE FALL**. And he wrote this strange story about a guy who jumps into a frozen lake, and at the bottom of the lake of this crystal cold water he finds the body of an Indian that drowned in it. He collects the body and wants to sell it to a merchant of mummies and things like that in Chicago, it's a very good story, and what struck me is that at one point he is hiding with this body in the woods in a van and he is freezing with this Shaman, and the police are after him, and suddenly the Shaman talks to him and they have this crazy dialogue, and I love that. And I said alright this guy understood something about that, so we never copied the dialogue but that was the springboard from which I invented the whole story.

ST: I guess what I want to ask you now is, do you like Heinrich in **POSSESSION**? Because you drew an analogy earlier, you referred to drinking at a lake from different shores, which is a piece of dialogue you give to Heinrich.

No I don't, because he goes into an organised phase of his research of himself, he is drinking from the pond, he is a western town Buddhist, which is an idiocy in itself.

ST: I can understand that he's a fool, he's a laughable character, and yet despite his mystical pretensions he does get a special scene when his 'ghost' seems to visit his mother through the window, so it seems that although he is misguided...

Like everybody (laughs)

ST: ...he's not entirely off the mark. Someone with a hostility to the idea of 'another realm' would say, 'Oh Zulawski, he's a mystic, just like this character he was lampooning earlier'.

Yes, well maybe when the window opens it's because Heinrich has a soul.

ST: Presumably with a motive or thought after death?

AZ: A lost soul but a soul.



Try a little Tenderness

Ulli Lommel interviewed by *Stephen Thrower*

How did you become interested in the story of Fritz Haarman? What motivated your decision to change the time frame of the story?

Kurt Raab, who played the lead, had been obsessed for some time with the Haarman character. He had put together a lot of documentation, like the diary that Haarman wrote. He brought it to Fassbinder's attention one day, and Fassbinder felt the subject matter was too tricky and risky. When subsidies from the German government were about to run out, Fassbinder was forced to make another movie. Since he was in the middle of shooting *EFFI BRIEST*, he said to Kurt and myself, why don't you guys make the movie, I'll produce it but I won't direct it. Kurt and I immediately saw what we wanted to do with the project, and Fassbinder gave us total control over it. When it got to the pre-production, we then moved near Cologne and Dusseldorf, where we also had to do some theater work at the same time. The theater didn't have any costumes from World War I, but had props from the late 30s and early 40s. The locations we found were more like from the 30's-40s, too. So we changed the story. It didn't really matter if the movie took place at the end of World War I or World War II, the situation was pretty much the same. The movie was made in October and November of 1973.

Homosexuals and paedophiles are often maliciously inter-linked by the media in this country, as a means of maintaining heterosexual taboos (although here 80% of sex crimes against children are committed by married men). Also, directors like Bertolucci and Pasolini have drawn critical parallels between homosexuality and fascism. How did these presentations of homosexuality impact upon your storyline, if at all?

I remember a lot of this kind of question when the movie came out. First of all, it is not a story that was just invented.

It was a story about a man who actually lived and did these things. The issue of homosexuality is unimportant in this movie. He could have also killed girls. It's not the homosexuality that makes him a killer. It is the society that supports and creates somebody like him, it's a certain climate that he instinctively takes advantage of, to survive. It is also his isolation that makes him want to control events. There are people who go to see this movie who are homophobic. They will say that all homosexuals want to do, ultimately, is pick up little boys and fuck and kill them. This type of person is not really inspired to think that way because they saw this movie. They always think that way. J. Edgar Hoover was a fascist, right? He was also homosexual, but he was a closet queen. He was somebody who ultimately resented himself, and couldn't live out his homosexuality. And he lived his life in a very fascist way. Homosexuals who have come out cannot, in my mind, be fascist. I can imagine an Argentine dictator who pretends to be a family man, but on the side he kills boys. This resentment and hatred is a kind of sickness, and before you know it, suddenly the fascist and homosexual issues go hand in hand.

There is no particular focus upon 'psychological motivation' in your script. How would you define your response to attempts to 'understand' killers like Haarman by reference to their childhood etc.?

The Haarman character is embedded clearly into the environment that supports what he does, by indifference. The police engages his services because they need him, and when the first rumors come that Haarman may be this killer, the police support him until they can no longer. I think his isolation and loneliness and looking for friends and desire to be loved are quite a lot of motivation for him to do what he does. In an interview with Jeffrey Dahmer, I read that he said when he was a child, he was waiting in the bushes with a baseball bat to hit one of his friends over the head, so he



could drag him back into the bushes and keep him there for awhile. He wanted to possess his friend, to have power over the situation, so the friend could not leave. And I think that instead of showing Haarman as a 10-year-old, waiting in the bushes with a baseball bat, that you can see it all in Kurt's portrayal. He is looking for love and approval. He is lonely

and wants friendship. If he would get that, as opposed to indifference, calculation, and expectations by the police, that maybe he would enter a different emotional territory.

Fassbinder seems to have been drawn to depicting social outsiders consistently throughout his career. Did he exert any influence on the choice of subject matter?

He actually didn't want to make the movie himself, but he had respect for our affinity for it. He didn't want to do it and it didn't fit into his career, really, and he thought it was too controversial. He knew that he would have to answer the kinds of questions brought up in this type of interview, for example, and he didn't want to do that. What I got from Fassbinder was everyone who ever worked for Fassbinder. All the Fassbinder superstars are in this movie, except for Hanna Schygulla. Even Jurgen Prochnow, in his first movie, has a small part. Everybody wanted to do it, and we got them to do it for practically nothing.

Fassbinder's role in the film is ambiguous, in that he is both a criminal and the agent of Haarman's capture. How did this casting come about?

It was very simple. We asked him to play the part, and he agreed. When he was on the set, he usually showed in a very bad mood or drunk. He wanted to get it over really fast. He made me shoot his scenes one after the other, so he could get out and play or do something else. I don't think Fassbinder was somebody who could deal with some other director's dynamics and structure. He could only do things his way or not at all. That's why I think it was very wise for him to not get involved in the production at all.

Your film makes conscious homage to Fritz Lang despite being a more accurate portrayal of Haarman's crimes than Lang's *M*. What made you decide to both adapt a true story and refer to the previous treatment?

There are only two places in the movie where you could say, there is a reference to *M*. One is the little scene with the girl and the ball. The other one is that Kurt is bald, just like Peter Lorre. The fact that Kurt is bald has nothing to do with Peter Lorre. We experimented a lot with Kurt's hair, and we wanted him to have a very precise and clear look about him. When he put on a wig, I had the idea instead that he should shave his head. He said he didn't want to do it, but I told him I thought it would look incredible. His face, his eyes, your expressions would become very clean and clear. We had a lot of discussions, and finally he did it. At that point, we never thought about *M*. We never talked about *M*, except once. When we were shooting the scene with the girl, there was a ball that happened to be at the location. It wasn't a prop that we had brought. Suddenly, as an improvised moment, we thought, let's do this, remember like in *M*? Later, in France and even in the New York Times, [critic] Vincent Canby referred to *M*. For us, not even subconsciously it was not on our minds.

One of the most disturbing scenes in the film is the one where a little boy seems to almost seek his own demise through persistently seducing Haarman. A more sentimental director would have avoided the implications here - how do you see this scene now? Some would say that victims seek their victimhood (a harsh verdict often mouthed by serial killers in their own defence).

I think what you're talking about here remains, for me, in the realm of mystery. As upsetting as this might seem to the families of such victims, I think there is, between the victim and the perpetrator, some kind of a co-creation going on. On another level of existence, another dimension perhaps, which is in the realm of mystery, these victim perpetrator activities are somehow prearranged. It could very well be that a victim seeks out prearranged situations, with a mixture of fear and fascination. These kinds of things are beyond what we know. We know as much about this as the ant knows about mankind.

Your later horror films are more 'traditional' in that they play the game of genre according to recognisably American standards. Yet still you seem drawn to focusing upon details that would be considered incidental by U.S. exploitation standards. Do you see a gulf between *TENDERNESS OF THE WOLVES* and the later titles, or would you like them all to be considered as a continuum?

If I had gone to China or the Soviet Union instead of the United States, the movies I would have made would have been quite different from those I made in Germany. The movies turned out the way they did because of the American scene. I remember when *THE BOOGEYMAN* came out, a German newspaper published a review that focused on something that wasn't on my mind at all, when I made that movie. It said it was a movie about what Ulli Lommel, in a nutshell, feels about teenagers in America. They wrote a lot about that, and it wasn't clear to me why they focused on that. But I guess from a German point of view, from having known my earlier movies, this is how they explained why I was suddenly making this horror movie in America. I do think the movies all belong together, in a continuum, even going back before *TENDERNESS OF THE WOLVES* and even including my first movie, *HAYTABO* (1971). But the movies are all different, too, because they were made in different societies and different countries.



FEATURES

P77

<i>Death Line - the fantasy DVD extras!</i> - Marcelle Perks	79
<i>Discovering the Esoteric Argento</i> - Chris Barber	85
<i>Notes from the British Underground</i> - Anna Thew	91
<i>The Grin Beneath The Flesh</i> - Ramsey Campbell	105
<i>To Excess - the Grotesque in Juraj Herz's Czech Films</i> - Daniel Bird	108
<i>On Set with Lucio Fulci</i> - Alan Jones	113
<i>Viral Dramas</i> - Marcelle Perks	117
<i>La Notte Bava</i> - Ramsey Campbell	125
<i>The Sliding of Pleasures: Dialectics of Literature and Film</i> <i>in the Works of Alain Robbe-Grillet</i> - Marcus Stiglegger & Martin Lindwedel	129
<i>Out of the Darkness with Pupi Avati</i> - Alan Jones	139
<i>Zulawski and Polish Cinema</i> - Daniel Bird	147
<i>Monochrome Magick</i> - Ramsey Campbell	151
<i>Directed by Paul Morrissey</i> - Ron Peck	155
<i>Foolishness as a Drug For Life:</i> <i>Juraj Jakubisko, Slovak Surrealism and the New Wave</i> - Daniel Bird	167
<i>Alain Jessua</i> - Pete Tombs	173
<i>S.F. Brownrigg's Southern Blues</i> - Stephen Thrower	177



DEATH LINE - the (fantasy) DVD extras

by *Marcelle Perks*

It was very nearly the first time I had sex when I first caught sight of this cult classic. From the vantage of the carpet, I fell in love with sombre shots of closed-down underground stations instead of my first boyfriend, who never liked horror films anyway. **DEATH LINE** was shown before midnight, so I hadn't expected it to be real horror and only caught the last hour, intermittently. Then, at sixteen, it didn't occur to me to make a note of the title or director because I hadn't quite got to the stage yet where I would spend the rest of my life chasing movies. A bad move, because the next few years I couldn't get it out of my mind and spent many hours scouring film guidebooks for traces of what I had half glimpsed.

Thousands of horror films later, I wrote about **DEATH LINE** as part of an MA course, or rather how this literal underground classic evaded analysis by conventional film criticism. The final result was e-mailed to director Gary Sherman. He replied instantly, and four weeks later I spent three days interviewing him in LA. This is a film that anybody who is anyone in the horror scene loves, but it probably won't be released anytime soon on DVD. Thanks to a rough ride from British critics and its distributors, **DEATH LINE** remains obscure, whilst its later American counterpart, **THE TEXAS CHAIN SAW MASSACRE**, is a household name.

Although you can get a VHS of **DEATH LINE** (aka **RAW MEAT**), the print is so dark that much of the detail in the underground scenes is lost. I was fortunate enough to view Sherman's infinitely superior copy, in the new age surroundings of his LA house, with Sherman giving a running commentary. So: calling all **DEATH LINE** aficionados, please view these pages as the 'DVD Extras' menu for a DVD release so exclusive it doesn't even exist yet, and read on...

Preamble

Sherman was into everything at an early age, including painting, sculpture and class A drugs. He even faked a birth certificate so he could drive early and started work as a DP at seventeen. By the age of nineteen he was doing lighting work and won a 'best editing' Emmy for his documentary, *Helping Relationship*. He also directed the documentary *The Legend of Bo Diddley* in 1966. The next logical step was to direct a film and originally he wrote a script for Ray Davies of The Kinks, about a thief going straight, 'Turned Over', but it never got made. Yet it opened the door to other things - Sherman decided to attract interest in another script and chose horror as a suitably commercial genre for a low budget movie by a first time director.

How it got made

"Between 1969 and 1971 I became quite well-known as a young hot commercials director. My commercial producer, and best friend at the time was, believe it or not, another ex-patriate American, Jonathan Demme. Both of us were young, enthusiastic and in a hurry to grow. Aside from commercials we were anxious to try our hands at bigger targets. Our first venture together outside the 30-second medium was a screenplay, 'A-A-A-Action' (never produced) for a sleazy little Italian company for which we were paid a whopping £500. Music, a love we both shared, led us to doing a 'rockumentary' on Ginger Baker putting together a new group called 'Air Force'. The group never gelled and the film was never finished. Still making commercials, we then got into the title sequence business. We did a sequence for a film called **EYEWITNESS** (1970)

produced by Paul Maslansky for the Broccoli/Saltzman company. Strangely enough, our title sequence, which I designed and directed, got better reviews than the film. That drew attention from many feature producers and led to suggestions that we should try to get a film made. They all said, 'Write a script'. We tried. After a spate of stories that truthfully could only be described as idealistic student films, we were told by John Daly, at Hemdale, 'Write a horror film'. So, while shooting commercials for the launch of a new deodorant for Proctor & Gamble, I came up with the idea for **DEATH LINE**. I sat down with the ad agency writer, Ceri Jones, and over the next few weeks, between making beautiful models ever more beautiful, we wrote **DEATH LINE**. Jonathan read it, gave it to Paul Maslansky, who read it and gave it to Alan Ladd Jr. and Jay Kanter. While they were making up their minds, Jonathan announced that he and another friend of ours, Joe Viola, were going off to Hollywood to talk to Roger Corman. In the next few weeks, Jay and Laddie said, 'Yes', and Jonathan (as producer) and Joe (as director) were offered another project to do for Corman. Jonathan and I spoke and decided that he and Joe should do the Corman picture and I would direct **DEATH LINE** with Paul Maslansky as the producer. To use the old cliché, the rest is history."

The Story Idea

The film depicts the last dying cannibal from a clan living in abandoned tunnels in the London Underground who were originally entombed there in a mining accident of 1892. Despite its plausibility, it is not based on fact, but takes its theme from an amalgamation of cannibal-inducing disasters where the survivors were forced to eat the dead, including the Andes plane crash, the Donner Pass tragedy (the first major rail road disaster in the US), and the Scottish legend of Sawney Bean. A television documentary, *Underground London* (part of the 'World About Us', series), which was broadcast in Autumn 1971 depicted the same City and South London lines, and Sherman recalls seeing a documentary on Sawney Bean and witchcraft. The 'larder scene' in the cannibal man's 'lair' comes straight out of the legend of Sawney Bean, whose clan of three generations lived in a remote cave in the 1780s, picking off roving travellers for food. When a potential victim escaped, an investigation of their caves

revealed that legs, arms, thighs, hands and feet were hung up in rows, like dried beef, a detail which is replicated in **DEATH LINE**.

The closed-down tube station, British Museum, was also used as a spooky location in the British comedy **BULLDOG JACK** (1935) which spoofed 1933 press reports that the station was haunted by an Egyptian ghost. 1972 turned out to be 'the year of the cannibal' with three other disparate cannibal titles in circulation: **TERROR AT RED WOLF INN** (Bud Townsend), **THE MAD BUTCHER** (John [Guido] Zurli) and **CANNIBAL GIRLS** (Ivan Reitman).

The famous underground scenes remain the most powerful, and critic Robin Wood suggests that **DEATH LINE** is a powerful embodiment of the 'Descent myth' which is fundamental to all civilisations and shows "*characters existing in a state of innocence who, by a process of (often literal) descent, are led to discover a terrible underlying reality*".

Budget

"I wanted to make **DEATH LINE** for the lowest budget possible. First of all, I was so booked up with commercials that my time was limited. Secondly, if I was going to successfully segue from commercials to features I wanted to make a film that would make money. **DEATH LINE** was budgeted at £86,000 (approx \$180,000) and scheduled to be shot in 20 days. A crew was assembled from people with whom I had been shooting commercials, all of them worked for scale. I flew to New York to see Donald Pleasence perform on Broadway and somehow managed to persuade him to do the role. Norman Rossington accepted because he wanted to work with Donald. And Christopher Lee agreed, not only to work with Donald, but because he didn't have to wear fangs! All of them worked for scale, even Christopher Lee in his cameo role. I'm still amazed how I pulled it off, Lee was the highest paid British star at the time!"

Ceri Jones, a copywriter who worked for a creative agency at the time, is credited as scriptwriter: the script needed a British name to satisfy funding criteria, but he only worked on Sherman's draft.

"In the pub scene - all the extras are crew - we couldn't afford extras. The guy drinking coke is Lewis Moore O'Ferrall, my first AD. The bald guy is John Alter, the Unit

Publicist, and all the rest of the gang are all crew members, except for the guy behind the counter who is real, we paid him to stay open."

The Locations

"The entire film was shot on location. The man's 'lair' was in an underground storage facility that belonged to British Rail and was near to Petticoat Lane. It was also habitat to a large number of homeless people (as well as rats), who we relocated during the shooting. The tube station marked as Russell Square is actually Aldwych, which only operated during the week, so we could only shoot there on weekends. London Transport flatly refused any cooperation whatsoever after they read the script. What we did was to find a script of an old spy-thriller, re-wrote some scenes for a tube station (similar to what we had to shoot) and re-submitted it through another production company. That's how we got Aldwych. British Rail, on the other hand, gave us the storage facility without any problem. Once the lights go off, we are down in the BR station, which we dressed with posters and signs to look like an underground station. The police station, Patricia's and Alex's apartment, the stairway, restaurant and the forensic lab were all in the same building, which was empty and had to be renovated. The pub and the theatre exterior were just around the corner from the building. The morgue was a real location. In fact the head pathologist there offered us the use of actual bodies. We declined his offer".

Cast (Rumours v. Reality)

"Originally Marlon Brando was interested in playing the role of 'The Man'. The idea was not to put his name on the credits and make him up so no one would recognise him, then release a rumour that he played the part, which of course he would have denied. Unfortunately, he was ill with pneumonia when we were filming. The young couple, played by Sharon Gurney and David Ladd, were both second generation actors, and didn't like each other very much. David Ladd was not my first choice but we had to use him because of Alan Ladd. Ladd didn't respond much to Gurney, and claimed, 'I can't listen to her lines and concentrate on my lines at the same time!' Donald Pleasence was always playing practical jokes on

set and threw many extra lines in. In the pub scene, the line, 'You want to go to Dartmoor? Have you ever seen Dartmoor?' was made up on the spur of the moment. It wasn't in the script but Donald would insult people of his own accord, that's why we cast the constable with a beard, so he could insult him! Did you notice how by the door there's never a dart in the dartboard? They're always in the wall and we changed them for every shot. With the scene with David, we kept changing the base line because Donald is trying to confuse David, so we also confused the audience! The cameo scene with Christopher Lee was shot in Jay Cantor's living room on a Saturday afternoon. I couldn't do a two-shot with the two of them because of the height difference, Donald was 5'4" and Christopher was 6'7". 'The Woman' had to come in and go through five hours of make-up in order just to lie there and be dead!"

The Underground scene: The ideal

"I wanted the film to be claustrophobic and contain not a single day exterior on film, we never wanted to see a world without a ceiling. We pre-flashed all of the film with a sepia colour so all the blend would have a warm browntone as opposed to yellow. The cell oil lamps were double wick with a 1000W colour tran back up, so the oil lamp actually lights the scene, ie all the practical light is the practical light! When David Ladd walks around at the end with a flashlight he has to wear three battery belts which is why he had to wear such a big coat! The only thing built for the underground scene was the arch at the end of the platform, we simply moved all the rubble that was there into place".

The Underground scene: The reality

"It was cold. It was damp. It was disgustingly smelly. Running cable for lighting was incredibly difficult. Because of the multitude of tracking shots planned, hiding the cable was hard. Bringing the equipment in and out was even harder. It smelled so bad, because everything was all real meat and it just rotted. We sprayed it with disinfectant and it smelled worse, all that gore sticking out is actually real meat. There was so much rat shit everywhere that we sent in a crew for 3 days spraying disinfectant before we came in to bring it up to safety standards, but the smell was still appalling. The set was excellently

designed, there's skeleton bones, a hand and several skulls, and all kinds of hundred years debris dressed into the underground wide shot, but unfortunately it's too dark to see all the detail. When 'The Man' goes down and picks up the watch and came up singing 'Gotta pick a pocket or two'. The object of this scene (although it is so dark you can hardly tell) is that all of his dead clan have some object or bit of glitter placed on them which is the burial ritual of these people. I don't think people really understand that".

Effects

"Most of the effects were down to Alex Campbell's superb lighting techniques. The long tracking shot is just on an almanac. We put six rats in the shot and used one trained rat. Some of the dead bodies in the larder scene are actually real people standing up. The little scabs on the Man's face are rice crispies stuck on with medical cement".

The Release

"At the opening night at Victoria Odeon I sat in a corner and watched the audience. There were lots of crowds coming in but Rank was frightened of pushing the film because they wanted to try to sell themselves as a family distributor, so they made it the second part of a double bill with **NIGHT HAIR CHILD** (1972). I found out they were running the 'A' picture to empty theatres, but **DEATH LINE** was more popular. The US release was catastrophic, AIP cut out most of the underground scenes and I had no say in how they butchered the print".

Sherman concentrated on TV commercials, turning down **THEATRE OF BLOOD** (1973) and it was not until the late '70s that he went back to film.

Press Reaction

Typically the British press responded negatively to **DEATH LINE**, as they also did to British classics **WITCHFINDER GENERAL** (1968) and **THE WICKER MAN** (1973). Films that did not valorise the ideal of the British realist tradition were not popular with the press and this affected **DEATH LINE**'s subsequent distribution. From the start, Rank did not publicise the film well, even

trying to play down its horror element. The captions on its press stills described it as 'A suspense thriller about a missing Defence Department VIP in present day London with an eerie, out of this world ending'. Cecil Watson, *The Daily Mail*, 16 November 1972: "We spend an inordinate time in the madman's dark, dank and bloody lair peering through the murk at the most revolting sights imaginable and wondering how such a sick and sick-making film came to be made". Derek Malcolm on **DEATH LINE** and **NIGHT HAIR CHILD**, *The Guardian*, 16 November 1972: "If these two films are an example of what British studios have to offer, the sooner they close down the better". Guillermo del Toro, the Spanish director of **CRONOS** and **THE DEVIL'S BACKBONE**, *Sight and Sound*, v5n1, Jan 1995: "One of my truest and fondest memories in film... **DEATH LINE** became a seminal experience for me. It forever altered the way I see horror and, in many ways, the way I see film". "The first uniquely British modern massacre" (Kim Newman)

Extra scenes?

"None. We shot on a four to one ratio. The nine minute underground shot was done in three takes and the first one was aborted. We spent one and a half days just on this one shot and the producer was going crazy. In the end, though, it took up nine minutes of film!"

In the US version, entitled **RAW MEAT**, a lot was left out of the infamous tracking shot, prompting Robin Wood to write the article, 'Butchered' in Rolling Stone magazine.

Last Word

"We thought about making 'Death Line II' but we all went on to do other things. Maslansky became famous for the **POLICE ACADEMY** series. With my three horror pictures there have been problems: with **DEATH LINE** the distribution was wrong, with **DEAD AND BURIED** the studio changed the film against my wishes, and with **POLTERGEIST III** (1988), the main star, Heather O'Rourke, died during the making of the film. I love making films and I'm a good film-maker but the business is so funny right now, nobody makes movies they make deals".



Norman Rossington and Donald Pleasance in DEATH LINE

DEATH LINE

aka **RAW MEAT**

Great Britain, 1972

director: **Gary Sherman**

screenplay: **Ceri Jones**

director of photography: **Alex Thomson**

editor: **Geoffrey Foot**

music: **Jeremy Rose, Will Malone**

Cast: **Donald Pleasance** (Inspector Calhoun), **Norman Rossington** (Detective Sergeant Rogers), **David Ladd** (Alex Campbell), **Sharon Gurney** (Patricia Wilson), **Hugh Armstrong** (The Man), **Jane Turner** (The Woman), **Clive Swift** (Inspector Richardson), **James Cossins** (James Manfred, OBE), **Heather Stoney** (WPC Alice Marshall), **Hugh Dickson** (Dr Bacon), **Jack Woolgar** (Platform Inspector), **Ron Pember** (Lift Operator), **Colin McCormack** (Police Constable 1), **Gary Winkler** (Police Constable 2), **James Culliford** (Publican)

NB Sharon Gurney did not work as an actress again after 1972. Her other credits are: **THE PORTRAIT OF A LADY** (1968), **WOMEN IN LOVE** (1969), **THE CORPSE** (1970), **COLD COMFORT FARM** (1971) and **LA CHAMBRE ROUGE** (1972)

Gary Sherman's other credits include

DEAD AND BURIED (1981)

VICE SQUAD (1982)

Mysterious Two (1982) TV

WANTED DEAD OR ALIVE (1987)

POLTERGEIST III (1988)

LISA (1990)

After the Shock (1990) TV

Murderous Vision (1991) TV

Missing Persons (1993) TV series

Poltergeist: The Legacy (1996) TV (episode *Let Sleeping Demons Lie*)



Discovering the Esoteric Argento

by *Chris Barber*

Dario Argento is one of the most innovative filmmaker/artist/auteurs working in the world today. His films draw their conceptual influences from some of the greatest European directors: Hitchcock, Resnais, Bunuel, Antonioni and Godard. In this he differs from other Italian directors working in the horror genre - Fulci, for example - who draw their main inspiration from more conventional American influences (though usually improving upon those, particularly in Fulci's case). The only other horror director worthy of this tradition is David Cronenberg. Both Argento and Cronenberg have used the horror genre to its most prestigious and rewarding possibilities - to examine the horror of existence. And to challenge the largest possible audiences to do likewise.

Further, unlike other more mainstream directors who have drawn upon the European art-house tradition (such as Brian de Palma), Argento twists, builds upon and innovates from these influences. Post-modernist critics may ramble on forever about the intellectual virtues of parody, pastiche and plagiarism, but this approach is far more relevant when applied to Argento's films. De Palma's **BODY DOUBLE**, for instance, amounts to an amalgamated rip-off of two far better Hitchcock movies: **VERTIGO** and **REAR WINDOW**. Perhaps De Palma's worth is more ironical?

Argento is probably best known for **SUSPIRIA**, the first part of a projected trilogy embracing the subsequent, far more complex **INFERNO** and another, as-yet unmade. **SUSPIRIA** is a very good horror movie, but it is limited by its poverty-stricken sub-genre of post-**EXORCIST** supernatural thrillers. But it far surpasses any American films in this stupid tradition - especially the worthless and meandering Friedkin original - and contains some stunning surrealist imagery, serving well as a rehearsal for **INFERNO**. There's little else to say about it that hasn't been said by others - it's all contained in its mesmerizing surface flamboyance.

From **THE BIRD WITH THE CRYSTAL PLUMAGE** to **OPERA** and **TWO EVIL EYES** certain themes pervade all of Argento's films. In his weakest films (**CAT-O'-NINE TAILS** and **PHENOMENA**), it is the disinterested, dogmatic or prosaic incorporation of such themes which weakens them.

DEEP RED is the most consistent and accessible film to search for Argento's thematic concerns. Indeed it is precisely the process of search, research and interpretation that is the key to all of Argento's films. **DEEP RED** is analogous in this way to Hitchcock's **VERTIGO**, but most immediately to Antonioni's **BLOW UP**. The conceptual and stylistic similarities were further emphasised by the casting of David Hemmings as star of **DEEP RED**. The full-length Italian version introduces Hemmings by showing him engaged in a jazz session with other musicians. (Sadly, the scene is cut from the British print). This would remind one of the opening scenes in **BLOW UP**, in which Hemmings is first seen with a group of workers from a factory production line, before driving off in his Rolls-Royce convertible. Both openings create an immediate ambiguity in construct character development. They also ask questions about the relationships between work and leisure, and production and consumption, which allude to Sartre's Marxist/Existentialist critique of social alienation. (see Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical Reason*).

In **DEEP RED**, Hemmings is a wealthy, affluent bourgeois, with an ingenuous, apparently innocuous nature. Though attempting to transcend his condition towards a wider social homogeneity, he succeeds only in showing his naiveté and ineptitude. (Although there is also a suggestion that group/serial unity is an illusion, and social reality is an inescapable heterogeneity). His first conversation is with another, very drunk pianist (Gabriele Lavia). His unruly behaviour embarrasses Hemmings, as does his insistence that he is a proletarian pianist, while

Hemmings plays the piano for pleasure. Later, Hemmings repeats his naivety when he visits this colleague and is confronted by his homosexual partner. This character trait is most amusing in his encounters with Daria Nicolodi, which force him to come to terms with a strong, independent woman. Early feelings that the lead character lacks confidence and assertiveness are akin to the Cary Grant persona in Hitchcock films like **NOTORIOUS** and **TO CATCH A THIEF**. (In **TWO EVIL EYES**, a biography on Cary Grant is seen on the killer's bookshelf - the books hide the victim's corpse). The audience is thus alienated from and unable to identify with the lead character. This technique from Brechtian political theatre found its best cinematic application in Godard's films. It challenges notions of identification with conventional cinema archetypes, such as 'Hollywood heroes'.

Suddenly, an unexpected phenomenon, an event outside the control of the main protagonist, shocks Argento's leads into a state of self-doubt and uncertainty. For Hemmings, in **DEEP RED** (as in **BLOW UP**), it is being privy to a murder - death - which he cannot prevent. The shock motif occurs in almost all Argento's plots, to both male and female characters: Tony Musante's in **BIRD WITH THE CRYSTAL PLUMAGE**, Michael Brandon's in **FOUR FLIES ON GREY VELVET**, Anthony Franciosa's in **TENEBRAE** and Cristina Marsillach's in **OPERA**.

Hemmings, Cristina Marsillach, and most particularly Leigh McCloskey in **INFERNO**, all display their character's social ineptitude and personal ineffectiveness through their restrained acting performances. (One is reminded of the way that the Warhol/Morrissey movies punctured the myth of acting). All three wander through the plots looking bemused and isolated - as if they had wandered onto the wrong film sets. As in Jacques Lacan, the more man tries to communicate with others, to achieve some objectivity (through language, for example), the more alienated from others he becomes. (The characters seem to have failed to pass through the 'mirror stage' of self-awareness).

At the same time, these obtuse characters represent the complacency of the audience. An audience (passively) watching (consuming) the film is divided into a seriality of individual spectators, when faced with the phenomenon (murder) that takes place outside of the 'hero's' control. The absurdity of the event in propinquity to him/her negates the possibility of negation - thus necessitating a course of action by the character. (Argento again recalls the films of Antonioni: **ZABRISKIE POINT**, **L'AVVENTURA**, or

Hitchcock's **NORTH BY NORTH-WEST**). Having witnessed such an event, each member of the audience, like the main character, is provoked or shocked into an inescapable act of engagement. The pre-conditioned complacency is disrupted.

You must now engage in a search for truth of metaphysical proportions. You must scratch away surface levels and interpret the semiotic codes. With Argento's characters, only an obsessive and meticulous search can break through the verisimilitude, (the wall-plaster which covers a child's painting of a brutal murder in **DEEP RED**; the floor concealing a labyrinth in **INFERNO**). As with most great works of art, Argento provokes you to ask more questions than he answers. In **INFERNO**, Irene Miracle searches for a key. She must dive into the depths of an underground pond - her unconscious, or the womb. She fearlessly dives deeper, until she is confronted by death (a savaged, rotting corpse). This she cannot face and quickly resurfaces. Later, Eleanora Giorgi pursues her quest for knowledge by seeking out a book in the library. When the library closes, she covets the book and steals it. Although unseen in her conscious act of theft, her own guilty conscience drives her into the depths of hell, depicted in an amusing Dante-esque sequence (suggesting the inescapable social conditioning of a Christian moral hegemony, and the contiguous - if not positively synonymous - relationship between power and knowledge). Meanwhile, McCloskey continues to stumble his way through surrealist dreamscapes in a beautifully deconstructed visual narrative.

Argento knows that film, like any art, can only be a symbolic representation of life - never reality itself. To quote Roland Barthes, "*The creativity of narrative (at least under its mythical appearance of 'life') is thus situated between two codes, the linguistic and the trans-linguistic. That is why it can be said paradoxically that art... is a matter of statements of detail, whereas imagination is mastery of the code*". So McCloskey, as the audience, cannot be known. We hardly know more about him at the end of the film than we did at the beginning. It is as the being-for-itself, or empty vessel (in the Socratic sense) that he emerges from the building at the end of the film - to continue his endless process of becoming. But will the audience emerge from his movie wiser? Argento is too shrewd to answer this.

Sacha Pitoeff's presence in **INFERNO**, as the antique dealer Kazanian, provokes a further reminder of similari-

ties with another masterpiece - Resnais and Robbe-Grillet's **LAST YEAR AT MARIENBAD** - a film which in an almost Nietzschean sense, confronts the incongruous repetition of life. Elsewhere, McCloskey's encounter with the ants nods towards Bunuel's **UN CHIEN ANDALOU**. When watching **INFERNO**, one may well recall a passage from Bunuel's book, *My Last Breath*; "...the mind is bombarded by a veritable barrage of dreams that seem to burst upon it like the waves. Billions of images surge up each night, then dissolve almost immediately, enveloping the Earth in a blanket of lost dreams".

The New York sky-line seen in **INFERNO** depicts a consciously post-modernist landscape, contrasting Gothic, Baroque, neo-classical and modernist architecture. This adds to the deconstructed narrative, use of *mise-en-scène* and disconcerting editing, to foster a sense of dislocation and confusion. This apparent haphazard narrative construction has caused some audiences - and film distributors - to become impatient with it, and unable to engage in its radical style and form. In fact, formalist considerations appear to have been forefront in Argento's mind. The film's operatic intensity (with some assiduity to Luchino Visconti's intense operatics) reminds one of Joyce's *Ulysses*, where different semiotic and semantic structures are used to engage the reader in an uninterrupted stream of consciousness. For **INFERNO** also has an atavistic plot - like Homer's *Odyssey*, one man's journey through life on a voyage of self-discovery. However, as in Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*, the heroic archetype is deconstructed

Such pedantic considerations aside, **INFERNO** is one of the greatest aesthetic experiences that cinema has to offer. It's climactic end - death - may leave the viewer with a sense of lack (likewise McCloskey's unscathed escape). But it is death as the real, inevitable and inescapable finale; whilst the total inability of any of the film's individual characters to communicate authentically with any other, captures Sartre's paradoxical metaphor, "*Hell is other people*".

TENEBRAE, by contrast, is the structural and stylistic antithesis to **INFERNO**. But it develops many of the same concerns in a different format, and is another masterpiece. Probably the best psycho movie ever, **TENEBRAE** stretches well beyond the boundaries of this sub-genre. It dispenses with the earlier, very literal depiction of the Freudian Oedipus complex and confrontation with the incest taboo (**DEEP RED**) - a veritable tradition in post-Pasolini Italian cinema. Instead, surrealist dream symbolism and subtle

metaphors and metonyms in the script suggest a more Lacanian perspective. (Jacques Lacan was a post-Freudian psychoanalyst. He uses the structuralist paradigms founded by Ferdinand de Saussure to examine difference in meaning based on the relativity of language. This approach is very rewarding when used to decode films).

Here the writer / artist himself is put on trial for crimes perpetrated in his name. Peter Neal, the writer, searches for and soon finds the murderer. He is the critic/censor, whose ignorance and moral hypocrisy leave him impotent and inept in his social relations. Having found and disposed of the critic with a spectacularly droll axe-in-the-head stunt, the suppressed and repressed return with a vengeance... Peter Neal takes up the killing spree. **TENEBRAE** is given a rigidly structured narrative, essential to such a convoluted plot. The brazen impertinence with which Argento plays tricks with the audience pushes credulity to the limits - but it works. "*When you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains - however improbable - must be the truth*", as Neal quotes from Arthur Conan Doyle. In this respect, it is a film on a par with Hitchcock's **VERTIGO**.

Sunny outdoor locations and brightly lit, hi-tech interiors provide unusual and surprisingly assuaging environments for **TENEBRAE**'s beautifully convincing, aesthetically staged and excessively violent murders. Victims scream and cry out as if having ecstatic orgasms, while they are stabbed, strangled, cut, impaled and axed in glorious hyper-reality. The film displays its ability to transcend the confines of the novel while espousing the highest creative and artistic values (as does the later **TWO EVIL EYES**, where Poe's writing is pushed well beyond its confines by Argento, in contrast to Romero's mundane realisation of the first story). The blood-spurting trick razor used by Peter Neal to fake his own suicide is a final - if unnecessary - reassertion by Argento himself, acknowledging the responsibility of the artist.

Neal's confrontation with a feminist journalist early in the plot is not the first time that Argento has been prepared to attack sexual stereotypes and present liberated, independent women. **DEEP RED** too was prepared to construct new and complex female roles. But like Fellini's movies, **TENEBRAE** and **DEEP RED** are willing to stand back and observe (sexual) difference, suggesting that only women artists themselves can seriously redefine female roles without being obtuse or patronising. **SUSPIRIA** and **PHENOMENA** both star heroic female leads. But it is in



TENEBRAE that a bisexually erotic dream sequence ends with a woman (dressed in white innocence and red shoes) thrusts her stilettoed heel into the mouth of a restrained man. The woman as phallus - possibly Argento's final word on the matter. (In fact, the part was played by a transexual, further adding to the ambiguity).

Argento consistently challenges notions of expectation. The structure, style and content of his films remind us constantly that we cannot expect nothing - only the absence of something. This is one reason why **INFERNO**, **TENEBRAE** and **SUSPIRIA** are such magnificent acid-trip movies, audio-visual extravaganzas for those wanting more from their drugs than just another rave. Their sense of dislocation, the feeling of being lost in time and space, is another.

Many of Argento's leading characters are devoid of emotional expression. Apart from blocking the ability of the audience to identify with whining victims, this explores the ability/lack of ability of individuals to come to terms with their emotions - particularly in relation to their understanding of their own mind/body duality, and their relationships with other people. These are themes that Argento shares with David Cronenberg, although each is radically different in his stylistic approach.

In **OPERA**, the killer scratches at a TV screen in an attempt to get below the surface. But unlike the floors and

walls in **DEEP RED** and **INFERNO**, his attempts are in vain against this one-dimensional representation. For audiences still too frightened to look at the horrors of existence, Argento's patience is running out. Cristina Marsillach may try to feign innocence, but the killer forces her to collaborate in the murders. His obsessive love for her makes him the real victim. She is bound, gagged - and finally has razor-sharp needles stuck under her eyelids. Unable to close her eyes - like Alex in **A CLOCKWORK ORANGE** - she is forced to watch the ghastly murders. These scenes are exuberant in their fetishistic eroticism. The murderer hopes that by displaying his absolute omnipotence over his helpless victims he will win the love and respect he craves. This megalomaniac urge - further emphasised by his being a cop - is the motivation behind so many real acts of violence. One is reminded of Brady and Hindley.

For Argento, art only serves any value or significance when it is watched by another. Art is a reciprocal process between creator and spectator. Only then is it complete. Lie to yourself if you must, turn away if you have to. But you can not escape responsibility. As Marsillach whines out during **OPERA**, you may wish to "...see nothing, feel nothing, think nothing", but if Argento has his way you won't have that option.

searching for the key: Irena Miracle in *INFERNO*
(this page and left)





Notes from the British Underground

by Anna Thew

FLUX '94

Liz Rhodes gets a new airing in the opening programme of the *FLUX* late night Underground series at the plush Minema Cinema in Knightsbridge, and shown along with the '60s sensation **FLAMING CREATURES** by Jack Smith. Burwell drums with light filaments in front of the screen.

FLUX '96

Rhodes's **LIGHT MUSIC** is re-contextualised with Genet's **UN CHANT D'AMOUR**, Fleischer **BETTY BOOP** prison cartoons, Cab Calloway, Matthee's **ANTIGONE'S CUT**, a reading by Bruno de Florence (of Network 21 pirate TV fame) of fragments from Roland Barthes's *Camera Lucida*, in an abortive series of film-meets-art-gallery at the MILCH Charing Cross Road.

January '97 - RESOLUTIONS dance season at the PALACE THEATRE, Duke's Road

Light Motif pays homage to Rhodes' classic double screen abstract film. Dance group *RA* stage a 30 foot mega-projection of **LIGHT MUSIC** with choreography based around and inspired by the phenomenon of Counterpoint. *RA*, influenced by Cage and Cunningham true, besotted by the hybrid. How can abstract flirt with camp so closely? Well here it did. The link between **LIGHT MUSIC** and camp is its theatricality. More on that later...

LIGHT MUSIC - 1976/7 - b/w - Two Screens

Liz Rhodes's **LIGHT MUSIC** has been making some kind of a comeback, out of the can for a tentative retro or

two of expanded cinema at the London Film-makers' Co-op in Camden and for screenings at the Chelsea Art School (still miraculously showing on genuine frangible celluloid rather than pirated video copies). As it requires two separate speakers and two projectors, the presentation can be dicey to rig in your average conventional theatre or cinema, with technicians loafing hot-tempered in the wings.

Two images are projected side by side, barely converging at the centre. The images consist of high contrast black and white lines or bands of varying widths. The films transmit two separate sound signals from the optical tracks to the speakers. Sounds ordinary enough until you realise the sound is actually being created by the lines which you see on the film, with these lines of varying thickness and frequency travelling into the optical sound track and making a sound. Let's not get too technical, but basically sound on film, until recently, was created by an unbroken/continuous optical pattern, in other words an image. Intermittent bulges and sharp points protruding from this continuous track or line, along the edge of the film, create high and low frequencies of different levels. Fat bulbous ones are bass, thin sharp pointed ones are treble. OK. The further they protrude the louder the level. Let's think about this physically. The image is created by solid black horizontal (in the main) bands of lines of varying widths and frequency. Such an image, if it runs into the optical track, creates a reverberant (intermittent) noise, sounds of different frequencies (thin lines high, fat lines low). When the thin lines run very close together this creates an almost continuous high pitched squeal. Fat lines generously spaced create a simulated crude thudding beat like someone half blowing, half spitting with big blubbery lips. About a third of the way through we're treated to a section with the occasional, but very welcome, diagonal lines crossing the horizontal ones...

LIGHT MUSIC plays on this phenomenon, and on

something else which was coming into vogue at that time, hailing back to Herr Peter Kubelka of Vienna, where the counterpoint craze began with Arnold Schoenberg and Anton Webern hitting the Viennese avant-garde **FILM SZENE**. Kubelka was himself an amateur musician and a friend of Webern. So it was simply adapted as a concept to film and (in Britain in essence) with great youthful fervour by Rhodes with **LIGHT MUSIC**. Rhodes saw and knew about Peter Kubelka's **ARNULF RAINER** and **ADEBAR UND SCHWECHATER**, and conceivably the entire discourse surrounding the structuralist bent of the films of the Viennese school according to a strict numerical system of notation involving a sound/image application of musical counterpoint.

Remember: *The image has not passed through the camera and is not created by the lens.* The full length film is 25 minutes, double screen (meaning 50 minutes, or 2,000ft, of solid celluloid). At 25 minutes the film tries and just fails to keep one step ahead of its audience. It is a durational environmental piece in the old fashioned sense, as the space or auditorium is transformed disco-like into a shuddering pulsating frame. It has come back into its own, turned full circle with acid-house and E-E-E.

It is intended to be durational in the sense that Tony Conrad's epileptic **THE FLICKER** film is, or Sharits's brutal **EPILEPTIC SEIZURE COMPARISON**. Rhodes gives the option of showing however much you like, 3 mins. 10 mins 15 mins. Possibly this acknowledges the film's main failing. Its range of variations dries up after 15 minutes and becomes progressively weaker in orientation. Tedium sets in and the excitement of breaking dimensions palls. The film fares best at around 17 minutes. If the sound track is played back at a comfortable (i.e. more subtle) level the ear is more able to detect and enjoy, or even invent/imagine, subtle changes, and maybe you can go to 20mins. On the other hand if you're in devilish disco/techno mood, belt up the level and the people closest to the speakers begin to reel in either sheer ecstasy or pain.

Essentially there are four tracks - two sound and two picture. the film is printed onto high contrast sound stock. There are a few watermarks showing that the film was self printed and processed at the old Co-operative. The images running on the four tracks differ, but with occasional apparent conjoining; high points of synchronicity - the audience will at points almost psychologically will this synchronisation to happen, in the same way that in Tony and Beverly

Conrad's strobe film **STRAIGHT AND NARROW** (consisting of grey horizontal lines) the audience would begin to perceive colours, an illusion caused by the effect of pulsating light on the retina.

Why Now?

Gershwin said all he ever wanted to do was wake or liven up an audience, that the audience could always enjoy something rhythmically more complex than conventional 4/4 time. Apply this to the structuralist materialist films and you'll find the ones with theatrical potential, those mastering the division and variation of light/sound/rhythm, stand the test of time.

Rhodes's other piece on this materialist sound/image theme is **DRESDEN DYNAMO** (5 or is it 8 minutes) made with Ian Kerr. There is an element of humour involved, with the audience delighting in becoming aware that the abstract materialist image before their eyes is generating the sound signal, that the lines are creating a crescendo as they become denser and closer together. Rhodes's and later Steve Farrer's films were to work on the basis of perverse humour. A rotating drawing on the surface of the film is creating not just a crescendo, as the lines become closer together, but an increase in pitch... Audiences shriek in ecstasy, breaking out into a rash of uncontrollable applause at the end.

DRESDEN DYNAMO is a delightful little number made with different sized letra-tone dots. It too has never been in the vicinity of a camera. It is printed in Indian two tone typed colours, Turquoise or Cerulean Blue and Rose Madder. The title is that of a famous football team, so the dots are a bit like buzzing footballs. It clearly plays an approximated tune on the sound track, humorous and joyful in its infantility, like blowing on a comb. Image-wise it's become acid house, played alike at gigs and in serious seminars on the fate of the avant-garde, it does that special little thing with its rhythms - keeps the audience awake and alive, the corners of their mouths turned up. Rhythmically and intellectually film has somehow to be that one step ahead of the audience's perceptions. The larger the audience the more collective brain power it has to be that step ahead of... and **DRESDEN DYNAMO** pulls this off. But then it is twenty years old. Pink dots and blue dots alternately dizzy their way in different formations this way and that, in enlarged or diminished sizes, across the screen, and there

are plenty of diagonals every so often to relieve the orderliness of the vertical/horizontal play.

But the Farrer and Rhodes efforts only take things so far. My personal feeling is that after all these were the *laissez faire* times of the unquestioned integrity of the 100ft reel, heavily under the influence of Warhol. Having eliminated all content nothing you do is cut out. Well if you've cut out the content, which incidentally Warhol never did, the audience does tend to feel at a given point, enough is enough. The important thing is that such films cost so little in relation to the dramatic environmental/theatrical effect they achieve.

Now let me tell you about 1977 which is where it all stopped...

Film as Film - the greatest chance of exhibiting film that ever was, at the Hayward Gallery 1977, making film finally scramble the last knee up on to that South Bank High Art pedestal. Now babes, you have your accreditation to the celestial spheres. Read Rhodes's and Annabel Nicholson's diatribes in the *Film as Film* catalogue for this Hayward Show. The women pulled out when they were prevented by the materialist males from representing their own history, when that history (like Genet's and Cocteau's and Dulac's before them) did not fit in with the limited pedagogic patriarchal status quo! Material film, Raw Film and no other.

A voluntary lock-out ensued. Whether the wisest move or not, this was a tumultuous turning point, a betrayal from which I feel Rhodes's and Nicholson's work never fully recovered. Rhodes's **PICTURES ON PINK PAPER** for the BFI, and indeed Malcolm LeGrice's **FINNEGAN'S CHIN** (that obsequious little number) were these artists' first forays into the 'other' avant-garde of high prized funding, but they didn't have the appropriate mastery for the business. Text is not the same trade. A lot of standing around and lurking about symbolically by meaningful windows and bathroom cabinet mirrors with a lot of heavy duty spouting on the sound track. Everyone's sexuality had now become a real deep problem; or rather everyone's unidentified puritanism. This is all that remains of my impression of these abysmal works.

Why couldn't sexuality and power have been re-examined in the light of the influence on the behaviour of the audience's hormones of a good sound and light rhythm? As a woman in the full flesh of youth, with free love in the

air (a bit on the tele' if not in the flesh), Rhodes imparts unabashed sexual physical energy to the audience, communicates a reality of life which they can share and recognise; which they can all feel; the pulsating rhythm of which she was mistress and master in one. That this giving of joy should have been replaced by so much moody soft focus whimpering, withdrawn, pretentious half-poetic meanderings... Some people get off on this but they rarely dare to if they're sitting next to a complete stranger in a large audience. It's cringe making.

A comparison has to be made. David Larcher succeeds, Derek Jarman succeeds in **THE GARDEN**, not a wholly successful film, sloppy in many ways, BUT: at the point where the text about the "wheels of mortgage" matches to clouds racing rough and grainy and hi-speed, the contrast, the shuddery goose-pimples, plunged into deep thought and empathy with what he is communicating of a personal anguish and fear of death, the fear of his destiny... we shudder to share these thoughts. The straight and narrow, mainstream (stuff) avant-garde set generally hate this power to really communicate to people. Jealous of community and conviviality, protective of their well defined territory, they set up barriers to true feeling. Old hat emotion sullies the dry old intellect, art is a withered dick.

Rhodes avoids the face. In any of her work. Nothing but headless faceless shadows, there to not confront or look into someone's eyes. To deny the representation or reflection of the human, because of some ridiculous unwritten law of the avant-garde, which perpetuates the religious austerity of Islam, puritanism, Judaism. This is fundamentalist avant-garde, where all is grey and forbidden.

A moment in cinema and direct communication such as Pasolini's **OEDIPUS REX** staring at the audience, his mother, the audience, in horror as he realises he is fucking his mother, the audience, his mother; in the moment of realisation that he has seen he has... transgressed! We are transfixed by his glare, full frontal, riveting. On the soundtrack a repeat of the baby crying, the same piece of sound that is used in the opening sequence of the film (the big boys really pay attention to sound). Ever examined the tracks on **A MATTER OF LIFE OR DEATH**? Most avant-gardists are not aware of what a Foley artist is, even though Ford Coppola has about ninety of them at work on his phenomenal soundtrack for **DRACULA**.

And so the big boys and girls, on the avant-garde as well as on the mainstream, pull their rabbits out of the hat

like Brecht said they shouldn't or they'd be damned, but then he did the same by using Weill and Eisler. The real theatricals do not bleat and skulk in the shadows of pretension.

An exciting thing began to take place in the eighties as a result of the proximity of underground movies and experimental music. They shook off the Brakhage avant-gardist rulings (i.e. a film can't be designated a place in the art fold unless the cheap and magical properties of sound are banished) and re-read Warhol without the glare of Gidal. Although Warhol never bothered to print his films with sound tracks, he didn't play them silent but with different musics, Velvet Underground, Lou Reed, and the pitter-patter of his self-congratulating stars.

Fire & Safety

You cannot project from anywhere without invoking FIRE AND SAFETY rules. *The Halloween Society* struggles with 2nd rate VHS projection, David Leister lugs in *Kino Club's* portables for their Monday monthly's at the Notre Dame Hall, Leicester Square even though under dust covers and hidden with piles of cardboard boxes, there is yes, a purpose built projection room with 2 x 35 mm projectors and one of the most beautiful, totally expensive 16mm projectors in town. Why are they not allowed to be used? Because there is a fire and safety ruling. Is it lack of trained personnel to operate these dream rockets, or of double, treble exits to disgorge the exodus of screaming proles? An old film law going way back depends on the notion of the spontaneous combustibility of nitrate film (although there are no cases of fires in cinemas being rooted to the combust-ing of film during projection. See Annette Kuhn, *Sex, Censorship and the Cinema*)

The State of the Underground ...

...vital, throbbing, seething, bubbling in London in the late nineties. Not. The reason why is down to one reality. PROPERTY, the availability of accessible affordable space and the regulations attached to theatrical usage. The sagging of the underground pulse rate over the last decade correlates with:

- 1) American and other Distribution chain ownership of almost all UK cinemas.
- 2) Ads completely taking the place of shorts in arthouse cinemas in the early to mid-eighties

- 3) Thatcher's big drive to benefit the privileged (mainly corporate) few in the property boom of the eighties. The violent criminal element of the market stooped to burning out artists from their warren of studios on the banks of the Thames (under the aegis of fire and safety, yet again).

Going back a bit because we have to get the real picture.

Jarman had a big pad in the 1970s, a studio at Butler's Wharf where he had his parties, his film séances, soirées, sessions. (Incidentally Jarman suggested the use of the fabulous Bankside power station as a good venue for the Tate). On the other bank was the B2 Gallery, Metropolitan Wharf, where Dawson featured Super-8 and 16mm screenings - until the Fire and Safety Officers paid a visit one night to close the gallery down. Yes, my film was showing at the time, which is why I remember it so poignantly; a two-screen Super-8 with a 5 minute intro, in pitch blackness, from Gertrude Stein's *Wars I Have Seen*. As the uniformed Fire Officers sneaked in the back, the voice on the sound track spoke: "*The enemy was in the kitchen, the enemy was there...*" They crept to the edge of the front row and took a seat in the blackness. Voice: "*And they wanted the chocolate cake the only piece, and they all wanted it*" How apt! How prophetic! Good old Gertrude.

As the film light began to flicker with grainy silent images of Berlin and flighty handheld camera the officers sat patiently. At the end of the film they said it was all very fascinating but yes, there'd been a complaint (informers then as now) and they were sorry but they would have to close down the show. Why? Fire and Safety. End of films at B2 and the end of Met Wharf.

The Arts Council subsidised *Film-Makers on Tour* and *The Film and Video Umbrella* which helped get new work round the UK to the regions in the early eighties. But they stopped taking much interest in exhibition of the work they funded well before the end of the decade. Along with the tightening of the squatting laws through the eighties and nineties, along with the colossal demands per square meter for warehouse space and the chi-chi, lego-land development of Docklands, where to show became more and more problematic.

In the late '60s and early '70s (which is where it all began) the main focus of the underground, the London Film-Makers Co-op, had squatted a number of Camden buildings. In the late '70s it occupied its first permanent

premises with a proper lease in Gloucester Avenue where it remained until only recently. The availability of such a large play-room meant that a solid ten years of activity was ensured and it remained active and lively until about '87. This coincided with the introduction of the first Channel 4 competition awards for avant-gardists to turn televisual. Funding always comes with a double edged sword.

An important but little-mentioned or remembered feature of the Gloucester Avenue site was that it was big enough to share with another group, and that just happened to be the London Musician's Collective. The LMC are now itinerant, they have no premises but a web site and record label and slot on Radio 3. Their departure from Gloucester Avenue around 1985 signalled a second big indicator of the beginning of the decline of avant-garde film as a strong and effective movement. The importance of this arranged liaison was that the Musicians (practically all of them highly talented, truly wayward and avant-garde) influenced the direction of underground film sound irrevocably and unequivocally.

This cultural cross-breeding has never been properly documented, less so analysed. So let's get back to Liz Rhodes. Rhodes is chummy with Ian Kerr. She may have no direct connections with the LMC (by her own admission) but Kerr does have. He's even in a band. Jim Divers, a great buddy of Ian Kerr, is also in a band of sorts and he goes out with Cordelia Swann. When Swann makes **DESERT ROSE** she engages Stuart Jones (who worked at some point with John Cage). Michael Maziere, who was running the LFMC cinema in '86 or '87, used Stuart Jones on **THE RED SEA**. Stuart Jones is a sound force to be reckoned with and where did they meet him? The LMC. The Musicians incidentally moved in with the Film Co-op simply because Annabel Nicholson (erstwhile film-maker and performance artist) was seeing drummer and leader of the LMC Paul Burwell.

To make a point about this important connection we invited Stuart Jones to do a stint for *FLUX* '94, back to back with a screening of Maziere's **THE RED SEA** for which he did the music track, in a clear creditation of the 50% value of the sound aspect of that film. Stuart Jones played regularly at the musicians, so did Paul Burwell, and Steve Noble. All three were given surprise turns at *FLUX*, to draw out the relationship of ideas for film and for sound. *Identical* were also brought in as the new generation of the spirit of LMC music, even though they knew none of the older musicians.

What folklore shall I tell you about? Burwell was with Annabel Nicholson. Nicholson made the beautiful **SLIDES** film with bits of celluloid matted several layers thick. When I met Burwell, an ex-merchant seaman with grubby red painted finger nails, he appeared to be running the LMC. Eight years later he was to do a phenomenal nostalgic solo in the deserted building, in which he drummed on the inside of an industrial drier which contained a light source. This cast rotating spills of light around the space, the speed of which related to the volume of sound and energy of the drumming. Burwell at best is extraordinarily image wise and theatrical. Working with Anne Beanie and 40 drummers gleaned from an ad in *Time Out*, they staged one of the most fabulous installation/spectacles of the nineties at the disused Bankside power station, part of the sound effect involving the converging of Fire Engine sirens from all over London as reports came in of flames issuing from the Bankside chimney and various other explosions over its roof and façade. His use of light has a primitive abstract/filmic quality. They'd toured the globe as *Bow Gamelan* with sculptor Richard Wilson and don't need any more plugs.

Swann and Comino, dames of the eighties new wave avant-garde, staged a *Beat Week* avant-retro involving both the Musicians and the Film-makers. It gets a mention in *Between the Lines*. Bob Cobbing emerged from the woodwork to re-do a reading of Kurt Schwitters's *Ur Sonata* (Bob Cobbing was one of the instigators of the Musicians Collective at Better Books in Charing Cross Road in the sixties, word would have it.) Jeff Nuttall the Beat Poet and Carlyle Reedy were dug up and revamped with a trombone player and sax, in a season conjoining film music and poetry, old and new, pure avant-garde and populist (in the form of Tony Hancock's **THE REBEL**). The ideal was pure *Arts Lab*.

Steve Cripps joined with Burwell and Beanie. The musicians got wild with explosions, flames. Burwell cycling through cans of flame. Cripps actually became a fireman (true) and gave (how topical) a *spiel* about the triangle of fire (and safety?) before blasting the brains of his unsuspecting audience. Cripps died of a methadone overdose and there was a plaque for him on the Musicians' wall. But his legacy lived on through the audience's expectations and the nerve of the performances. And also through film. William Raban has 400ft somewhere of film of Cripps's legendary performance at the *Acme Gallery* in Shelton Street. (Both *Acme* and *Air Gallery* hosted film and sound events (including an early

Throbbing Gristle 'disconcert' at the latter). Now no more, just two other spaces that were ripped from the bosom of London's Art World.

Those to look out for viz a viz film-maker/musician synthesis, influence connection: N.G.Smith **SERMON**, David Leister **WINDING UP**, Cordelia Swann **DESERT ROSE**, Jo Comino **SPLEEN**, Mike Maziere **THE BATHERS** series and **THE RED SEA**. Derek Jarman/*Simon Fisher Turner/Coil*, from **IMAGINING OCTOBER** to **BLUE**, Ian Kerr **PERSISTING**, Jim Divers/*Cordelia Swann* **PASSION TRIPTYCH**, Sandra Lahire **SERPENT RIVER**, Sally Potter, Matthias Müller/*Dirk Schaeffer* **AUS DER FERNE**, Michael Bryntrup/*Dirk Schaeffer* **LOVE**, **JEALOUSY AND REVENGE**, Andrew Köttung **FLESH FILM**, Anna Thew **EROS EROSION** and **CLING FILM** (with *Identical* - Steve Thrower, Gavin Mitchell, Orlando), Franko B performances with sound by *G-Force*, George Saxon **PIG OF HEARTS**, David Larcher from **MONKEY'S BIRTHDAY** to **ISH TANK...** People who just wheel on a musician without any understanding of what they're up to don't of course count.)

Nights with FLUX

November '96 - July '97 - 8 months later the poster for **FLUX** at the *Milch* gallery bearing the wonderful woman from **FLAMING CREATURES** with her arm above her head exposing her tits is still pasted untorn, untouched, uncovered in the stinky alley near Charing Cross Road. The softer side of me imagines it's not by chance that the public appreciate and respect art when they see it, even if it's only a fly poster. The November '96 programme ran thus:

BETTY BOOP (we weren't sure but it later turned out to be true that it is Betty drawn on the arm of the cute hunk in Jean Genet's **UN CHANT D'AMOUR**); followed by **ANTIGONE'S CUT** by Jean Matthee, the one with the ex bank robber boy friend. Marilyn is frozen and reprinted, mid-screen mouth open, lips parted throbbing, slowed colour of each frame fluctuating, moving from positive to negative... a woman's scream, pain. Exposed. Marilyn for this **FLUX** screening wide angle on both walls some 10 ft high and 18 feet across - silent. The audience, captured, were freeze-framed themselves. Then **UN CHANT D'AMOUR**. Never before shown in such a strange context of women's adulation, then of focus on speech and language. Why did a writer like Genet make a song without words? We may never know the answer.

Ideas of films never before programmed together.

An evening of audience participation included Gerard Malanga's print of Warhol's **COUCH**, a selection of 13 of the 30 or so rolls which were made. Malanga's combination happens to sport 3 consecutive rolls of banana consumption, with trannies or half-naked acolytes of Warhol provocatively unzipping and eating the fruit. A cue to sell bananas to the audience, which they were not averse to. People in the back row were having a real inventive time, whilst others had an amount of exotic oral satisfaction in tune with the spirit of the film, which includes a nice little scene of Malanga and Rufus and some other fellow sucking off the skinny woman, what's her name, Baby Jane? Polymorphous sexuality on screen as in audience.

Followed by Georges Rey's **LA VACHE QUI RUMINE** ('The Cow Chewing'). One of the best shorts ever made in which a recumbent cow simply masticates for 3 minutes. They showed it on TV - no good, but the larger the audience the louder the laughter as the cow cocks an ear in response to titters and squawks in the auditorium.

A couple of programmes which appealed:

Included two films which one had never seen before, dragging the old alongside the new by the scruff of the neck, the old with its aura of faded scratch and muted turquoises and pinks (film fades and loses its colour after 20 - 25 years). Cronenberg's **CRIMES OF THE FUTURE** all over peachy pink. The **ITCH SCRATCH ITCH** cycle. **T.O.U.Ch.I.N.G.** **SOLAR ANUS**. **BLUE MOVIE** (pubic hair impressed on the surface of the film by the anally fixated and too far gone Steve Farrer). **IN QUEST OF MEAT JOY** by Carolee Schneeman only just made it as they'd withdrawn it from distribution on account of poor pic. quality. This is now its added charm as '60s belles and beaux in swimwear, the women sporting transparent plastic shower caps, writhe and romp with now a heap of unsavoury looking plucked chickens, now with pots of blue and red paint which have also become turquoise and pink. The evening ends with **RAW NERVES**, **THE LIBIDINAL ECONOMY OF FILMUS INTERRUPTUS** by the American Manuel de Landa, a spoof on Chandler films with hand-matted twirls and wipes. The audience were rolling in the aisles.

This is what **FLUX** tried to do to, to present films from the past in conjunction with other art forms, to do thus

seriously and humorously, to lose no opportunities for settling the score, showing the knowledge and the art in these modest works, and balancing a modicum of pedagogy and cultural motivation with entertainment. It was the easiest thing in the world if the work was good and strong. Our screening of Tony Conrad's epileptic **THE FLICKER** lost only one person. Our screening of the Burroughs/Balch collaboration **THE CUT UPS** lost 2 out of 250. Relocate the context of the film and the audience never has a problem knowing how to share in its enjoyment and appreciation, even if it is a study in art boredom (now out of fashion?).

The other objective was to trash the ghetto exclusivity of the fringe audience, gay, straight, black, white, straight, feminist, masculinist, music/sound lovers, painters - to attack and question the separation of disciplines rooted in the 1400s (more difficult to do of course but it is worth it). Now we only need the space! It has to be a central venue. It has to be large. And flexible. It can't be expensive. It has to have a second Fire and Safety exit. Do you know of any such venue?

The new cinema for the misnamed Co-operative is bedevilled by jobsworths. It is too far out of mainstream town and can only serve the EC end. It is also too small, after the millions sunk into it. Underground film uses on the whole non-Odeon gauge film - 16mm or Super 8 (in the Eastern block they used 35mm). This is the medium which is most under threat from the video and computer market. The survival of 16mm as a viable product depended largely on its widespread use for television. As video and computer are perfectly adequate for such small scale TV formats they have literally eaten into the 16mm market, if not eaten it away. How do we fare now that one of Britain's biggest laboratories has withdrawn from the 16mm market? Nevertheless, in a theatrical situation video cannot compete. But there is no market for the theatrical projection of 16mm. There is no money in it, and even at the BFI - where one would imagine the preservation of our vital history would be at the core - they speak of 16mm being dead. I'm not sure what the underground can do to resist this sad tide of change.

Brief overview. The state of the underground. Huh.

The ICA Cinematheque was designed to show VHS reference copies from the ICA's intended video library to members of the public, for 50p or was it £1. Even then many

artists resisted having their work on VHS. Now, shamefully, the new avant-garde like Oki Hiroyuki, and old, like Jonas Mekas with his Warhol and John Lennon diary films, are shown alongside Antonioni and Fassbinder retros in this miserable cupboard to minimum audiences, with two lines of biblical sized helvetica light for publicity.

1993. Our favourite rep cinema *The Scala* closed, just when they'd begun to find 500 people who'd come to see Underground programmes, saucy or otherwise. *The Ritzy* in Brixton shut for a re-fit, then re-opened with several screens. Jane Giles ran *Cinema Fumé* there for a while, where you could fume or even smoke, but now she's running BFI distribution. What happened to the beautiful *Electric Cinema* in Portobello Road? Even *The Everyman* is recently dropping the frequency of its rep. It did a gay/lesbian night for a while, under which banner you often catch one or two experiments with more than just sexuality, i.e. Barbara Meter's **NITRATE KISSES** at the hideous Gay and Lesbian Festival which also showed Müller's **SLEEPY HAVEN**, but didn't show Bryntrup's documentary with Jürgen Baldiga the photographer dying of AIDS but uncomfortably snapping all. The point of that little tangent is the programmers' fear of showing anything really hard... everything has to be featherweight and disposable like **HUSTLER WHITE**, ho ho.

The Exploding Cinema still runs. The last I went to was years ago in Brockwell Park. Masses attend and part with a fiver or maybe it's more now. The organisers would appear to be raking it in. The artists receive nothing. This stinks. It also means that the quality of the work only includes those who are willing to show for nothing. Often this is because nobody in their right mind would pay to see it.

Halloween Society (What an uninspiring title) charges a sixer these days, runs once monthly, at the *Notre Dame Hall*, Leicester Square. Does not pay its film/video artists unless they ask to be paid. Not many do. All shows on VHS with poor projection until recently. Has quite a lot of good films, so long as they're light and easy to swallow. Back-slapping humour and smutty sex kicks are favoured. Tends to toss up clichéd themes, *Sex and Death*, *Seaside Films*. Has atrocious comedians which gives the whole event a Butlins feel. On occasion they even stoop to Bingo type patter. Not my scene at all. A fair smattering of long haired hippies. The man who started it up works for the British Council which is how they come to see recent films without the help of a fag. (Oh, a fag wouldn't be seen dead in these environs by the way.)

Kino Club is mainly musician based and so is great for novelty and talent, with David Leister doing a one man impresario with edited found footage and loops on one or two screens. The musicians tended to be a bit illustrative, looking up at the screen distracted from their music, which I feel is a shame. *Kino Club* showed in a number of pubs, latterly the *Water Rats* in Kings Cross, with modest entrance fees. I don't think Leister intended the musicians to become subservient to his hotch potch of funny found scientific films and other bits and pieces. Often you'll catch Steve Noble (drums), Roberto Bellatalla (cello), Alex Kolkowski (violin), Alex Maguire (if there's a piano), and if you're really lucky, some of that lot with Billy Jenkins (electric guitar). Their biggest foray was on the *South Bank*, projecting onto the end of the Royal Festival Hall. Only problem was, concrete doesn't reflect film too well and, though the images were a nice big size, the concrete made them as grey as the South Bank. The musicians were a hit and they didn't bother about what was going on on the wall.

Kinokaze are fly by night by repute, so much so that I've never seen them. Get hold of their mag though, if they're still doing it. The one I got two years ago ran an article by Kenneth Anger on how he shot *EAUX D'ARTIFICE* with infra red film in the Villa d'Este in Tivoli (of particular personal interest) and another by Cosey Fanni Tutti about her organic sex life (of definite public interest). I was impressed by their orientation.

All tend to show whatever comes their way, so the work can be uneven. The main attraction is to be with the throng I suppose, which is OK if you fit in with that throng and not the other one. There's no elegance, and serious work would fair poorly. Overall feeling is one of hum-drumness.

Once upon a time Kathleen Maitland Carter, who'd been brutally slung out of the LPMC when the long knives were out, programmed a few good underground stints at the *Pullit*, a large industrial building not far from the canal in Camden. I was horrified when she madly programmed my *EROS EROSION* - which is a bit landscape and mournful - with Annie Sprinkle under the title *Dangerously Safe and Sexy*. Well it draws an audience she said, and once they're there they don't care, so long as the films are good. So, out of context, it was the best screening *EROS EROSION* ever had and I learned my first lesson in anti-thematic programming. Themes only need to be an excuse, like titles, and then after that the question is how do the films spark off each other, contrast support, enlighten, explain even.

Why Do We Need An Underground?

The removal of the successful *Art and Experiment* section from the London Film Festival dealt a final blow to the international avant-garde in this country. The motives for its closure were not financial (and not quite fire and safety) but chiefly ideological. Why do the authorities not like underground film? Because they're not intended to, because the content and more often the form of underground, experimental film drives them up the pole. What would the new face of avant-garde film/sound be if there were a space and place and a little more money to go round? It seems it was dropped before it began, subsumed by commercial expediency. 16mm closes down. In France they process in Belgium, it's that bad.

Douglas Gordon re-projects Hitchcock's *PSYCHO* at the Hayward, slowed to 24 hours. This show is seen as a betrayal of the underground, ignoring its history. Adrian Searle eulogises for half a page in *The Guardian* or was it *The Observer*. They should certainly do him for copyright as it would give the question of authorship a bit of a run around - particularly when he profited with his winnings from the Turner Prize!

These spin offs are for writers clamping onto what they see as the next smart thing to be seen with after Damien Hirst. They've not been given much to go on, but Searle is good at making anything sound good. A heavy case of the Emperor's New Clothes. The psychology of duration and Gordon's individuality at showing us how disturbing *PSYCHO* really is slowed down - well. The slowing down of films is as old as the hills. I was recently asked by Jarman's biographer whether Derek was the first to slow down films. Of course not we retorted. The projectors were designed to slow down to 3 fps, 6 fps, 12 fps, take your pick.. so that the amateur could lovingly elongate that moment of drooling over little Johnny. See the eyelids open and close. Anne Rees-Mogg refers to the succession of 24 still frames per second in *Real Time*. The underground has been besotted by shattering the illusion of movement.

Single framing. Peter Kubelka talks about the strong cut and the weak cut. The strong cut being the one where there is the greatest difference between one frame and the next, most frequently, the weak, hidden or seamless cut being a thing of the mainstream, causing no palpitation, no excitement, inviting no comment.

A strong cut for you: Douglas Gordon to/----->

David Larcher

Osnabrück 1993. David is standing dazed and dishevelled and barefoot in shabby stretch/leopard skin leggings, mesmerised by the outline of his own shadow on the video projection of an unfinished work in progress: **VIDEOVOID**. Clutching a microphone into which he speaks in a low whisper, half to himself, "What I was going to do here erm, it's funny seeing it projected for the first time." Shadow artifice. The audience gurgles adoringly.

Osnabrück European Media Festival 1990. David's film **EETC**, 5 monitors. Various versions brought along, so he talks and drinks with the five versions running simultaneously. People clamouring to squeeze into the large room, no standing room, no space on the stairway... In Germany Larcher is hailed as the phenomenon that he is. Have you ever heard of him?

Jackson's Lane, Archway, London (before it became a lo-brow chi-chi dance space). David is in a pair of stripy pyjamas in a makeshift bed with a bedside lamp just like in Granny's flat. The **'ISH-TANK** film is floating on a TV screen at the foot of the bed. Multi-projections from Monkey's business (excerpts from the epic double screen **MONKEY'S BIRTHDAY**. A bottle of whisky on the small round table echoing Granny's... His *amour* at the time, the film-maker young Julie Osborne with dark glasses, a tight leopard skin cocktail number and a long white stick... Larcher curses the acolytes, critic O'Pray and Curtis from the Arts Council who show up nervously and then lurk in the wings. "Get out I don't want you, what good have you ever done? You never gave me a penny so you can shove off. Make sure they paid to get in. Playful acrimony. Huh."

Larcher made a film called **MARE'S TAIL**, 4 hours, 16mm, which Berio saw at the old Arts Lab and rated as a work of genius, when David was only a young man. His next epic was **MONKEY'S BIRTHDAY**, 6 hours, two screens, colour. An exotic travelogue with two separate optical sound tracks. They could run completely in synch but they never do. **MONKEY'S BIRTHDAY** outstrips Warhol's **CHELSEA GIRLS** in assemblage terms with its complex hand matting, superimposition, colour tinting, solarization and other optical effects and devices, the kind of which have never been produced or reproduced on video and which are not the premise of words. **MONKEY'S BIRTHDAY** is alchemical.

1991. David is lying on his back with one foot in the air to demonstrate to the appalling Film Co-op administrators the division between two screens in a twin screen film, in case they were too blind to notice, adding for which as an artist he ought to get paid double, even if it's only to pay for the repair. David Dawson of KD Digital is slewed projecting. The film shreds. David yells that he wishes the admin' bitch Wieland would croak.

With two films together that makes twelve hours of celluloid... now someone somewhere must have believed in David otherwise even then, it really wouldn't have been possible to produce such an extravaganza.

There is a group of overwhelmed Viennese art students sitting on the bench at the back of the cinema, spell-bound as whirling dervishes solarise, change colour and swirl against fast moving clouds. **MONKEY'S BIRTHDAY** is an epic. It was made 25 years ago and it has been shown about 7 times in Britain. Of those 7 I've seen the full thing twice. The first time there was an audience of me, a member of the public and the Co-op Cinema projectionist.

Larcher is one of many who fell foul of the mainstream avant-garde because of his hybridity, his collage, his use of all media, his tendency to synthesise, to take the medium for what it was, stretch it to where it would go. There is no-one else - and with this number, age doesn't enter into the equation - working in Britain who has taken film printing and video to such limits

Granny's flat in Gloucester Road.

It's the middle of winter. David comes in starkers, waggling his dick. Cerith Wyn Evans, my daughter Rachel and I are sprawled on the bed in the back room at Granny's, gawping at yet another version of **EETC**. Ra tells him to act his age.

The music boys for **CLING FILM** have all got a big crush on David's mind and copy as much of his *oeuvre* as they're able whilst he's away. They probably made off with his double dildo too.

In excited 'round the fire and I'll tell you a tale or two' mode, David turns on a tape he can't think what to do with. Sarah his new found *amour* (David has an insatiable penchant for lush ladies), is lying naked on the couch David, goat-like and 20 some years her elder/senior cavorts, hairy and unshaven, like an evil satyr round his prize, brandishing a heavy leather belt, thwacking her with a nod

in the direction of S & M. He's making more noise than doing harm. He peers disgracefully and myopically into the lens, his face distorts. He takes the camera, the new video toy, and tunnels between her legs to arrive at a hairy mound. He's discovered a cave OK, a crevice. The tape goes frizzy. The camera swoops round and hones in on her face. She's out for the count. He lifts an eyelid. Her eyes roll white. David pops into frame and turns to face the lens: "And what are you doing now Malcolm LeGrice and Peter Gidal and the little Arts Council, tee hee..." David chips in live, "Can you imagine, on my great night of passion? How could they have got so deep into my subconscious... It's appalling... I'll have to do something about this tape some time." "The guilt", I thought. Guilt for not having played their game, joined their club.. Guilt for showering your seed recklessly across Europe, when they had the knot tied in the vasectomy vogue, one of them at the age of 23 because he didn't believe in reproduction in any form... Guilt for your wavering sexual preferences, when they had none.

1994. I take **VIDEOVOID** in a programme on tour to East Germany, Leipzig, Halle and Dresden. I'm worried the work may be too abstract for an uninitiated audience. East Germans haven't had much exposure to the avant-garde as you can imagine. In Leipzig after the films the discussion is thronged. And one after the other people try to explain to themselves and to others why they sat mesmerised, mouths open, almost hypnotised for half an hour, when there was no narrative, no story line, not really any kind of a line, save allusions to the 18 Buddhist states of the VOID encircling the earth. In fact they'd spent half an hour mesmerised by travelling images of drop out, the bits you usually don't want or reject... the holes in the tape. So this is an electronic manifestation of aspects of the void.

But wait, don't you sit for half an hour listening to Bach, abstract even by musical standards, does Bach always have a melody (the musical equivalent of a story line) or does he drop it and pick it up again? David is a trickster and magician. He works with Anthony who used to work with Pink Floyd Seeing the two of them putting the finishing touches to the tracks on **EETC** (bravely shown by Rod Stoneman on Channel 4)... A line of coke. A fat joint. Cans of lager. What a state! 4 a.m. the two stood in front of banks of equipment like two loony magicians or improvising musicians - their musical tools also consisting of image tracks, dealt with as tracks... Now! Bring it in now... One,

two, three, four.... Get it! Start! accompanied by agitated foot tapping and finger clicking etc

There is a difference between the way a film will perform with an audience when the artist is adept at manipulating sound levels and tone, at introducing a sound, an interruptive breath, even spontaneously, playing the image and sound as two hands on a piano, and when they are not. By this I don't mean they can't assemble adequate and meaningful chunks of text on paper, but they can send the audience rushing for their ear plugs, like if I opened my mouth and tried trilling that aria from the Magic Flute. The difference is between those who are musicians (even amateur musicians) and those who are not, those who can act/use their voices (yes, like in the theatre or at least in public) with the presence to hold the audience, and those who can do no such thing; natural born story tellers, singers, charmers - and those who are not. So the films fall into two categories for me, the ones where the sound is conscious and real, the second where the sound is a mess. It may be the tenor of the voice that's wrong, as in Liz Rhodes's insistent use of the plum alienating variety. Slowing it fractionally to lower the pitch doesn't take away the sign value, the meaning of this sound. For miners, workers, thickos from the regions, this accent and tone is the epitome of the coloniers. Cut. OK. Redo it out of courtesy for the dead, Change your fucking accent. Cut the squawky edge from the voice. Think about the theatre of voices, whispers, shouts. How to captivate, or alienate the audience on purpose.

Larcher the amateur clarinet player. No coincidence that it is a blowing instrument which requires him to control his breathing when he is speaking and it is this, above everything else, which holds and captivates his audience. He would probably loathe my guts for picking up on this, but you can comb through his soundtracks and find an abundance of electric sound moments, but his voice is shifting pitch, faltering, finding its pitch, musing.. Waffling on the soundtrack is real close up work, but he chooses to take the philosophy of others, the authority of the philosophy of others, the scientific handbook or text, backed up with secondary texture - tap tap tap on the mike, contrasted with a casual but conscious familiarity, "hello, hello" set against the deep rasping tobacco cracked old wise philosophers' rhythmic formal enunciations: "*Quand est la trace, quand est le vol, quand est l'oiseau...*" Accentuated by the rhythmic white flash underlining the image, the single or double line of white subtitles.

GRANNY'S IS (1989, 46 mins)

Originated on low-grade video. Unusually a BFI NEW DIRECTORS film, and so blown up to film for distribution by the BFI. A few prints sold at cost price. The BFI almost immediately lose theirs and don't bother to replace it. The Freunde der Deutschen Kinemathek's is either lost or stolen. There are two versions - the TV one at 58mins and a longer one on the international circuit at 70-80mins. Whereas 58mins is too cramped, the longer version has a tedious 10mins. As usual it would be better somewhere inbetween.

In 1988 or was it 1987 Larcher's Granny died. This was a terrible blow. Granny had painted, was cultured I assume and exceedingly tolerant of David's eccentricity, perhaps because of her own. She was eccentric herself we soon gather; quite proper, of her era. David lived in Granny's flat near Gloucester Road, whenever he was in England and not France. (It's important not to forget that Larcher is from old colonialist blonde stock. Mauritian. Bi-lingual. French/English and he could also speak Mauritian Creole which absolves him from some of the sins of his Fathers (but not many). Everyone thought this an eccentric arrangement, for a grown man to live at Granny's flat. The warmest shot of the intended film was Granny in bed on her birthday in a pink bolero with one tit exposed, snorting coke with great abandon and opening presents - Christmas. David's kids were distraught when Channel 4 insisted this scene be cut since it might shock and offend the general public: a scene which'd make us all wish we'd had a real dame, a game Granny like that.

GRANNY'S IS is an affectionate and exacting portrayal of losing some-one who has been there so long; who is still lingering in film cans and on videos and in photographs like a ghost, and realising that now that she is dead how much she meant to him, how much his own life was formulated by her. David only manages to say this through Proust's words. Proust gives him the back-up to grieve over a thing a grown man ain't supposed to sniffle about - an old woman. Proust gives him the authority, the permission even, to grieve publically through this film.

A clock ticking - a still image of Granny in bed - an image of Granny on a park bench. The sound of traffic near Gloucester Road, near Granny's flat. Granny is very old now - in bed - her faint voice - a video image distorted. Granny's eye beams out lurid video lines. Granny is no longer - (are we viewing a horror film from the underworld?). Granny's eye, in close-up:

"Could you come and sleep near me?" "You know, I feel really jumpy...."

(we catch the word "ghosts") - aeroplane sound. Cut to Granny's foot in a dainty brown leather shoe with a leather bow. She hums and taps her stick. This stick tapping is repeated like **DON'T LOOK NOW**. Now over and over. Granny is only a trace - is distorted. Titles spin like crazy.

Granny: *"I used to go to church and my tummy used to rumble - awful thought".*

David busy with his camera. **SHE WHO SLEEPS** - Title over image. Matting out Granny. David in the photographic studio. The crystal ball from **MONKEY'S BIRTHDAY** and **EETC**.

"She married George Elsworth... At some point he made circular saws in Sheffield..."

The image rotates, and puns: *"Circular saws are quite interesting."* A room. Granny's flat. David twists the lens in front of the camera. The image changes magically. Granny and her friends scoff biscuits. *"I don't drink coffee Granny"*.

A refrain from the funeral. Voice *"she died..."* The voices of the old ladies. David gathering together the photos in the room....

"Logi Baird" David unscrews the diopter. The image physically rotates, becomes circular, becomes rectangular. *"I know how difficult it is to stay alive... It's not the weight of years you know"*, David says to Granny.

David vacuuming the empty flat. Granny's room. Exaggerated clock ticking.

WHAT IS SPOKEN REMAINS IN THE WAITING ROOM FOR THE FUTURE TO HEAR IT

David faffing with leads in his leopard skin leggings. Scraps of domestic chatter. Meanwhile, an image of David left alone in the flat. The stuff of diary or autobiography. Within the frame of an old plate camera - a ship on an ocean - wavering - the edge old Granny's face. Quiet. Peacefully she sleeps.

David whispering sotto voce - words from Proust as Granny slumbers:

"I became conscious that she was dead... but behind my thoughts was a callous and cruel young man ...the memory of what she had been. (only phrases, isolated words, can be captured).

"shocked by the certainty of that annihilation... a mere stranger..."

before and after those years I was and would be nothing" "waiting for the kettle to boil" "I was wondering whether

to have coffee or chocolate" Kettle whistles. Clock ticks. Gloucester Road traffic rumbles. Kitchen sounds. Granny is very old. *"I'll leave you to go to bed"*

The light goes out. Blackness. Granny: *"What are you thinking?"* David: *"Nothing special..."*

TAP TAP THE BLIND NIGHT'S WHITE STICK (appears on the screen).

Granny's having a sherry watching TV. Granny's painting of her room. Silhouette of Granny as an old woman, like the ageing Adam in Piero della Francesca's Arezzo fresco. The silhouette appears like a shroud. The family group photo David plays with obliterating and re-appearing members of the family group, so delicately done, *and she's your daughter* Daughter and child sail into the plate camera frame. Granny's video image rotates across the image of the room. In the background like a refrain *"Don't cry Granny.... Don't cry Granny"* whispering gently, voices as texture.

"Suddenly called into being by her voice" "very upset I don't know why, alas, it was this fact" "I found her there reading. She wasn't aware of my presence. She was absorbed in thoughts which were never allowed to be seen... to become the spectator of one's own absence..."

Granny by the sea in Mauritius.

"The delicate quality of her mind... smacked of necromancy... each face that we love... a mirror of the past... seeing the most trivial aspects of our daily life..."

Granny's faint image like a ghost. She stumbles elderly, clad in a dressing gown, across the room. Faint voice in the background *"beloved person..."*

Close up of Granny's ageing watery eye, whitening, pallid, clouding over, translucent.

"A transparency of contiguous and overlapping memories..." "Since she vanished very quickly" "crazed eyes" "a dejected old woman".... Silence. Dripping sounds. The ticking clock. Some faint music. A kind of electronic buzz. A disturbance. It falters, fades like a radio wave. Granny is snoozing. Radio 3. The image is carefully placed and changed.

Abrupt cut. Granny with a neighbour. *"Oh darling!"*

Granny is now matted electronically into the arm chair - into the plate camera... David to old lady neighbours *"I've got her picking her nose. Would you like to see that?"*

Granny is everywhere, in the pictures, in the dresser - on the wall.

"That's fantastic..." "Extra-ordinary" Posho voices pipe in. David stands in the doorway contemplating the empty

grannyless room. Banalities. The neighbours conversation, *"...and she got gastric flu" "I'll murder him" "He only does it because he loves you"* The neighbour cuts in. The image flips. A Proust text in French appears in granny's armchair. Granny: *"You're interested in the solar system aren't you?"* Granny varnishing her nails. Granny on the phone. The word **UNHINGED** appears prominently across the image (this seems to refer to David's lostness after Granny's death). Parts of Granny's diaries. The word **DAVID** in handwriting. Granny as a child. The image floats in - a hymn is vaguely heard in the background. Perhaps from a funeral. The image is highly distorted. The return of the little chant *"Don't cry Granny..."* A subtle mix of rhythm - voice - hymn.

David examining photos under the eyeglass, endless albums.

"The invisible shadow" "mirror" "in other words her double" "see no image" "suffering mourning is preferable..."

Granny's room reflected in a convex mirror or the curve of a lens. A wide angle... fish eye lens. David puts out the light. Puts out the light and then puts out the light. Creaks and more creaks. Fab titles to the tap tap tapping of granny's stick heard like a thousand woodpeckers, like a litany, like a literal army of Granny's sticks, relinquished to the sound of creaks as the titles rotate pivoted on an invisible axis, fly into reverse and swivel back again - forward reverse forward... occasionally wind shooshing in the trees or simply the hiss of tape noise... The film ends.

Now I would go on to talk about the use of momentum and speed and rhythm, the choreography of video effects, which begins quite crudely in **EETC** but this is definitely the thing to watch for and wonder about the function of in **GRANNY'S IS** (as well as in **VIDEOVOID**, **VOIDTEXT** and the upcoming **'ISH TANK**, which he is currently working on). It wasn't until he was allowed to use the video artists' monastery / play school at Montbéliard in France that the Nijinsky of celluloid became the Nijinsky of electronic art.

There is not enough space here to give more than a few leads or hints. What is important to stress is that in the UK we the potential audience are given restricted access, via the structures that exist, to see and enjoy the cutting edge of media art, which incidentally has not issued from the gallery system but from the laboratories and workshops. Clearly such artists made the big philosophical and tactical

art market mistake of calling themselves makers. David Larcher was last year invited to become Professor at the New Media Centre in Cologne in Germany. He's never held a job down in his life before, but he's been lured by the financial and other appreciation that he is receiving outside this ungrateful, uncultured quick art buck country. The sad fact is that Larcher is only part of a massive UK media art drain. We are left wondering not very much about the outbreak of easy-come easy-go, Emperor's New Clothes,

thin-on-the-intellectual ground installation work that remains.

(PS: Several of David Larcher's films and video pieces are available through London Film-makers' Co-op distribution. Contact them for details. Note to colleges, film societies etc: arrange screenings wherever possible! This man is the real deal, a brilliant artist whose work has been criminally neglected in his own country - ignoring him is like ignoring Brakhage! - Stephen Thrower)





Monogram madness THE APE MAN menaces a Rhodes Boyson lookalike whilst a mortified starlet looks on

The Grin Beneath the Flesh

by Ramsey Campbell

"Many do not realize that horror has always had an element of the comic in it." So say Anthony J. Fonseca and June Michele Pulliam in *Hooked on Horror: a Guide to Reading Interests in Horror Fiction* (Libraries Unlimited, Englewood, 1999). Is this something of an exaggeration? I don't recall many chuckles in Le Fanu or Walter de la Mare, not to mention *The Willows* and *The White People*, for just a few instances. Still, horror and humour do have crucial elements in common: timing, for example, and a willingness to confront taboos in a form that stylises them, which can make them more approachable. Both genres are also liable to be accused of having gone too far. I would also suggest that nothing is funnier than a really bad horror film, though I say this in a spirit of celebration: for me the world would be a poorer place without Edward D. Wood. All of which certainly suggests some inter-relationship, and I hope the ruminations this prompts may prove at least amusing.

The horror genre has always been hospitable to parody. The Gothic novel had begun to parody itself before Jane Austen sniffed at it. Of course this won't do as a dismissal of *Northanger Abbey*, which both pointed to this very situation and suggested that there could after all be some truth in the Gothic. Equally, by the time the feature film began to take it on, the theatrical genre had reached a self-parodic state. Thus Paul Leni (*THE CAT AND THE CANARY*) and Roland West (*THE BAT, THE MONSTER*) relish parodying the old dark house thriller by treating it with arguably more style and enthusiasm than it deserves. *THE MONSTER* also finds room for outright comedy, with a brilliant wire-walking sequence that turns into a gag worthy of Keaton.

Nor had verbal humour to await the coming of sound. While Lugosi's delivery of Dracula's ambiguous lines is unforgettable, and established a talent for melodramatic comedy on which he was able to draw during the doldrums of his career (in *THE DEVIL BAT*, for instance,

where he instructs the chosen victims of his giant bat to dab a spiked aftershave on their throats and then intones a sepulchral goodbye), it was Max Schreck's Nosferatu who hailed a photograph of Mina Harker with the intertitle "*Is this your wife? What a lovely throat*." Some have assumed that the sequence in *NOSFERATU* where the vampire's coach speeds up to the accompaniment of an intertitle reading "*The dead travel fast*" is meant as a joke. I'm reminded that before a showing of the film at the Philharmonic Hall in Liverpool, the leader of the musical accompanists told the audience that they wouldn't mind if we laughed. Guess which spectator was heard to growl that some of us would mind. Presumably some people need to be reassured that humour is intentional, a theme to which I'll return.

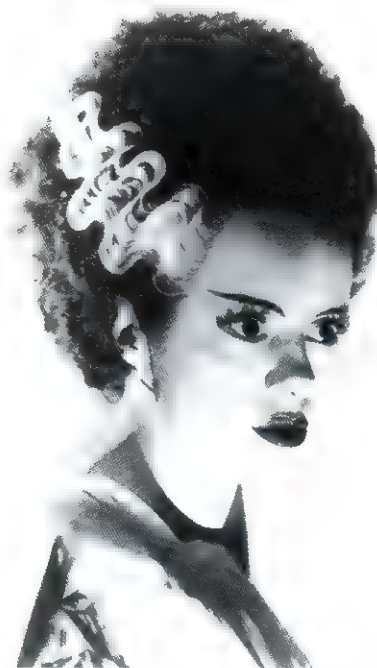
The first major exponent of humour in the horror film was James Whale, whose sly gay wit is seldom fully appreciated. In *FRANKENSTEIN* this ranges from puns about birth, both visual (the cord that is the film's first image) and verbal ("*Here he comes*" and of course "*It's alive*"), to outright comedy (Frankenstein's double-take at learning what kind of brain he has put in his monster). *THE BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN* hardly needed Mel Brooks to underline the humour of the meeting of monster and hermit, and the film is more overt than its predecessor about the implications of two men "giving birth" to a creature; rather than object to the title on the grounds that it confuses the creator with his monster, I'd argue that the bride is the decidedly feminine Dr Praetorius, who seduces Frankenstein away from his marriage before that can be consummated. The same actor, Ernest Thesiger, was also Horace Femm, owner of *THE OLD DARK HOUSE*. Could the name be another wink to those in the know? Whale directs some of the film as a comedy as broad as Charles Laughton's Yorkshire accent in it, an approach that leaves audiences unprepared

for Whale's willingness to frighten. If the film parodies the genre of its title, it is darker than most of the originals.

How intentionally comic is Michael Curtiz's **DR X**? Excess in our genre can be fun for those able to take it, and this is among the earliest examples on film, where one member of staff at Dr Xavier's Academy of Surgical Research is a cannibal maniac, and all of them potentially are. More power to Curtiz for never sending it up. A yet more spectacular thirties instance is Dwain Esper's roadshow movie **MANIAC**, now available on British video, in which Poe's *The Black Cat* was turned into a deranged exploitation extravaganza. Not only does the unfortunate cat suffer deoculation, but the perpetrator swallows the result. Intertitles were brought in to turn the film into a serious study of psychosis, but only added to the fun, not least by their arbitrariness.

The way Universal horror films often resorted to comic relief was taken over, along with their monsters, by Hammer (at this point I abandon from sloth the semblance of chronological order to which I've kept so far). Perhaps the Hammerheads didn't notice that their films already gained humour from Peter Cushing's timing and his relish of his lines, though admittedly the movies would be less endearing without the pop-eyed cameos by such stalwarts as Michael Ripper and Miles Malleon. In the previous decade, however, the Universal influence had gone fascinatingly wrong when taken up by Monogram and PRC. In **THE APE MAN**, for instance, one might have thought the spectacle of Lugosi's titular transformation would have satisfied the comic appetite at least as much as the tragic sense of taste – poor bugger, he's afflicted with sideboards that would shame Rhodes Boyson and with a swinging of the arms too – but the film also offers walk-ons by a grotesque who, in the final shot, identifies himself as the screenwriter. Does one laugh, or groan, or merely experience a tightening of the guts? I suggest that the unique embarrassment of witnessing the death-throe of a joke shudders very close to a kind of horror, and this seems to be my cue to talk about discomfort as it relates to our theme.

For a start, imagine that Hell might consist of eternity spent locked up with your least favourite comedian. What an incitement to lead a better life! A film that seems to hint at such a situation is **THE NUTTY PROFESSOR II: THE KLUMPS**, starring Eddie Murphy and Eddie Murphy, not to mention Eddie Murphy... Overtly the film may attempt a comic reworking of *Flowers for Algernon*, but another



similarity is to Philip K. Dick's *Upon the Dull Earth*, in which everyone on Earth turns into the same person. Next time you're drifting off to sleep, try visualising a world populated by Eddie Murphy in various stages of grossness. I'm not sure I envy you your dreams

While the discomfort implicit in all this (or in anything involving, say, Norman Wisdom) is presumably unintentional, some films seem to aim to achieve it. That's the area in which the ruthless psychological satire of Mike Leigh meets the bad dreams of David Lynch. The heightened realism of Leigh's TV films such as *Nuts in May* and *Grownups* (just as unsettling as the better-known *Abigail's Party*) challenges the audience to deny that people – we – are like this (whereas the documentaryish surface of Ken Loach's films seems to insist on a single political interpretation of events, an approach that I'm afraid always sets me echoing Kingsley Amis). Recently television shows such as *Trisha*, that mismating of spectacle and would-be social work, have invaded Leigh's territory, but the power of his observation seems undiminished, not least because the portrayal of his grotesques never invites

anything as comforting as a straightforward laugh. A similar realism underlies such episodes in David Lynch as Henry's dinner with his girlfriend's parents in **ERASERHEAD**, surely the most disconcerting such episode since George Stevens's **ALICE ADAMS**, in which the dinner scene is one long slow burn of embarrassment. One source of discomfort is truth to experience.

More openly popular comedy can also confront the darkness. My sense is that Kenneth Williams adopted so many personae partly in order to combat the depression of being alone with himself. Of course depression is often the underbelly of creativity, but even in comedy it sometimes seeps to the surface. Are there many more oppressive half-hours than Hancock's attempts to while away a Sunday? Perhaps some of those involving *Steptoe and Son*, surely the grimmest comic duo outside Beckett. It's also hardly surprising that *One Foot in the Grave* ended with a revenge murder that could have been imagined by Ruth Rendell or Nicholas Blake – why, one episode of the series was even called "The Pit and the Pendulum" – and the coda of the last episode was oddly sobering, a series of quintessential Victor Meldrew gags at which, because they were posthumous, the audience didn't laugh. As we get older it becomes more crucial to know how to laugh at whatever pratfalls mortality has in store for us.

Well, this is grim, isn't it? Perhaps it's time to return to the comforts of horror. In *The American Cinema* Andrew Sarris commented that Blake Edwards's **A SHOT IN THE DARK** got laughs from gags too gruesome for most horror movies, but that doesn't hold true any longer. Indeed, in the **EVIL DEAD** trilogy gruesomeness famously meets the Three Stooges, as if they weren't frightful enough in themselves (though in one short they met a mummy grislier than either Abbott and Costello or that pair's Egyptian nemesis). This kind of hybrid seems to bother some mainstream audiences, not to say reviewers. When should they stop laughing in **THE WICKER MAN**?, they complain. How to react to Polanski's peculiar humour, which in **DANCE OF THE VAMPIRES** lurched from farce and slapstick into eerier vampire imagery than anything in Hammer? The worst offender, if one believed contemporary reviews, was **DEATH LINE**, widely derided as inadvertently hilarious (though Robin Wood, Philip Jenkinson and Tony Bilbow sprang to its defence). I can only conclude that the London press show refused to let the film be itself: certainly in a packed public screening in Liverpool the

audience laughed only at the film's intentional humour, uncomfortable though some of that is. I'm also reminded that around the same time Alan Bennett condemned **WITCHFINDER GENERAL** for not being unintentionally funny, which he declared all horror films should be, and drew a passionate riposte from Michael Reeves.

I wonder whether Bennett would acknowledge verbal wit, one of his own strengths, when it occurs in horror films. Some lines from **PSYCHO** are never forgotten once heard (though let us remember that Robert Bloch invented them), but the acme of verbal playfulness is surely **VIDEODROME**, a feast of puns and ambiguities entirely suited to its theme. It's generally worth scrutinising the names of Cronenberg's characters as well as everything they say. Only audiences less than alert to his methods can have been surprised by the overt if disquieting comedy of **EXISTENZ**.

And only readers hoping for me to dredge up a conclusion from my ramblings will be disappointed. Let me rather end by celebrating the variety of fun to be had in our field. In no particular order – good Lord, in no order at all – I commend the irrepressible Antipodean humour of Peter Jackson, the man who must have made the Muppets ashamed to appear in public... the spectacle of the entire cast of **THE GIANT CLAW** performing with a seriousness that proves they never saw the special effects... the task Ed Wood set himself in **NIGHT OF THE GHOULS** of staging a fake séance that was meant to look inept... for the utterly unsqueamish, Lucio Fulci sending up his entire horror career as a deranged version of himself in **CAT IN THE BRAIN** ("But Lucio, you'd have to be mad to go and see a psychiatrist")... years before Kevin Williamson undermined the horror film with hollow post-modernism, the greater (not to say less obtrusive) wit of **HALLOWEEN**... the often unacknowledged and entirely intentional comedy of Lovecraft: "Damn it, it wasn't quite fresh enough" was a running gag in *Herbert West: Reanimator* before it was ever filmed... **DEATH TRAP**, Tobe Hooper's reworking of **PSYCHO** as a nightmare pantomime complete with Captain Hook's crocodile, a film only the humourless could have wanted to see prosecuted... But let me end on a serious note after all. Horror, exactly like humour, can be used for reactionary and repressive ends. Monsters that utter bad jokes as punch lines to their atrocities should be viewed with suspicion. Never trust a film that announces we aren't to take it seriously – never take it at its own valuation, at any rate. We who know the genre recognise that nowhere is everyone's last grin closer to the surface.

TO EXCESS: The grotesque in Juraj Herz's Czech films

by *Daniel Bird*

Since 1966, Juraj Herz has directed over 30 films for film and television, forming a body of work constituting a dense exploration of the fantastic. Herz is primarily known in the West for a brilliant, nauseous black comedy, **SPALOVAC MRTVOL** (**THE CREMATOR**, 1968). However, the director's filmography encompasses a wide range of genres: **MORGIANA** (1971) and **UPÍR Z FERATU** (**THE VAMPIRE OF FERAT**, 1981) can be classified as horror; in **PANNA A NETVOR** (**BEAUTY AND THE BEAST**, 1978) **FROSKHÖNIG** (**THE FROG KING**, 1990) and **DIE DUMME AUGUSTINE** (**THE DUMB AUGUSTINE**, 1992) he adopts the formal trappings of the fairytale; **PASÁŽ** (**PASSAGE**, 1998) is an exercise in the absurd; and **ZNAMENÍ RAKA** (**THE SIGN OF CANCER**, 1966) is a warped detective story. More recently (1994 and 1995), he has made two French films in the Maigret series about the eponymous police inspector, and there is even a burlesque musical to his credit, **KULHAVY DÁBEL** (**THE LIMPING DEVIL**, 1967).

Outside the New Wave

Herz's palette is predominantly grotesque, and, as in the films of Fellini (described by Herz as his "only love") and more recently Alexei German's **KHRUSTALIEV, MASHINU!** (**KHRUSTALIEV, MY CAR!** 1998), visual and narrative excess becomes a formal strategy. Expressionist madness is played as comedy in **SPALOVAC MRTVOL**; in **MORGIANA**, the doppelgänger device is loaded to the point of absurdity; whilst themes of social decadence and moral decay are played out of a physically sick body in **PETROLEJOVÉ LAMPY** (**OIL LAMPS**, 1971).

Herz possesses a somewhat precarious place in film history: he is a Slovak known for his work in Prague, though since his emigration in the late 1980s the majority of his

films have been made in Germany. However, Herz's 'Czech' films are generally disassociated from the New Wave, for, on the one hand, the emergence of Herz as a major filmmaker came after the Prague Spring with the release of **SPALOVAC MRTVOL** in 1969, and, on the other hand, his work lacks the political bite of, for example, Jan Nemec or Vera Chytilová's films, favoring, as the Czech author Josef Skvorecký puts it, the 'time machine' or period drama.

However, within those constraints, two of Herz's subsequent films, **PETROLEJOVÉ LAMPY** and **MORGIANA**, made immediately after the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia, are in no sense compromised. For example, Herz encouraged cinematographer Jaroslav Kucera to continue the colorful photographic experimentation of Chytilová's **SEDMIKRÁSKY** (**DAISIES**, 1966) and **OVOCE STROMU RAJSKÝCH JÍME** (**THE FRUIT OF PARADISE**, 1969) in **MORGIANA**, resulting in the film being described as the 'last' film of the New Wave.

Herz himself stated that he feels little sense of belonging to the Wave, but rather a kinship with Evald Schorm and the late Jaromír Jires. Like Schorm and Jires, Herz contributed to, as Josef Skvorecký put it, the "manifesto of the Czech New Wave": the portmanteau adaptation of Bohumil Hrabal stories **PERLICKÝ NA DNE** (**PEARLS OF THE DEEP**, 1965). Herz's episode, however, was later excluded, along with Ivan Passer's, to reduce the running time. Unlike Schorm and Jires, Herz did not attend FAMU, the film and television faculty at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague (Akademie múzických umění, Praha; AMU).

Conversely, Herz's formal training began, like that of Jan Svankmajer (an exact contemporary of Herz, both being born on 4 September 1934) by studying puppetry at the theatre faculty of AMU between 1954 and 1958. Like two of the most famous New Wave luminaries, Jiří Menzel and

Milos Forman (not to mention Svankmajer), Herz was first employed at the Semafor Theatre. If Svankmajer later dismissed the Semafor theatre in an interview with Peter Hames for discarding avant-garde approaches to the proto-surrealist librettos of Vitezslav Nezval and Jiri Mahen, he nonetheless employed Herz as an actor in his debut film, **POSLEDNÍ TRIK PANA SCHWARCEWALDEA A PANA EDGARA (THE LAST TRICK OF MR SCHWARZWALD AND MR EDGAR, 1964)**. The final stage of Herz's apprenticeship ended with a stint as an assistant director at Barrandov Studios, working on Zbynek Brynych's **TRANSPORT Z RAJE (TRANSPORT TO PARADISE, 1962)** and several Ján Kadár and Elmar Klos films, most notably **OBCHOD NA KORZE (THE SHOP ON THE HIGH STREET, 1965)**.

A conclusion, perhaps, to be drawn Herz's biography is that attention to key filmmakers in the New Wave — Nemec, Chytilová, Menzel, Forman and Schorm — hinges upon auteur principles at the expense of the broader cultural context of not only music and literature but also the graphic and tactile arts, as well as puppetry and mime. The role of Hrabal, as well as that of Milan Kundera as literary consultant at FAMU, haven't gone unnoticed. However, in terms of dictating the shape and rhythm of countless New Wave films in post-production, Zdenek Liska's music has received comparatively little attention.

Whilst it is unimaginable to separate elements of graphic art and puppetry from Svankmajer's films, the consistency of Ester Krumbachová's rich contribution to the general aesthetic of the New Wave through costume and décor has never been given the attention it deserves. With the benefit of hindsight, it's now unimaginable to consider Chytilová's filmography without incorporating not just feminism but elements of both mime and avant-garde theatre. Therefore, in what follows — a brief summary of Juraj Herz's Czech films (at their most grotesque) - it makes sense to treat Herz as a polymath, a filmmaker who has adopted a bricolage approach to filmmaking, incorporating elements of music, theatre and puppetry.

Individuals in an uncivil world

Based on the novel of the same name by Ladislav Fuks, **SPALOVAC MRTVOL / THE CREMATOR** is set during the war years, before and after the signing of the Munich agreement. The Nazi occupying force capitalizes upon the

dreams of bourgeois family life, not to mention the conformist tendencies of an increasingly deranged cremator, Karl Kopfrkingl. Impressed by National Socialism, or rather realizing a vested business interest, Kopfrkingl not only ups the productivity of his crematorium (which is soon to be put to use by the Nazi's anyway) but also goes about the ritual murder of his wife (hanging her "as if she were a Christmas decoration") and son upon learning of their Jewish blood.

Besides rhyming the progressive Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia with Kopfrkingl's descent into madness, as Peter Hames points out, the Jewish theme links **SPALOVAC MRTVOL** with the films Herz worked on as an assistant, **TRANSPORT Z RAJE** and **OBCHOD NA KORZE** as well as Nemec's **DÉMANTY NOCI / DIAMONDS OF THE NIGHT (1964)**. Along with Alfréd Radok's **DALEKÁ CESTA / THE LONG JOURNEY (1949)**, such films are broadly existential in that they are concerned with the fate of individuals defined in terms of actions in an uncivil world. Herz's film offers a perverse, cynical twist, equating survival with conformity. The timing of the release of **SPALOVAC MRTVOL** was uncanny, less than a year after the invasion of another regime in which conformists were also most required.

Excess lies at the intersection between Herz's absurdist, blackly comic subject matter, and his formal execution. Nauseating humor is the product of grotesque exaggeration, both thematic and stylistic. As in Nemec's **O SLAVNOSTI A HOSTECH / THE PARTY AND THE GUESTS, 1966**), the absurdity of **SPALOVAC MRTVOL** is thrown up by the incongruity of misapplied action.

As if concentrating 'the Final Solution' to a bourgeois funeral parlor was not enough, Herz distorts bodies further through the use of disorientating tracking shots, knock-out fish-eye lenses — enough even to rival Juraj Jakubisko's equally warped **ZBEHOVIA A PÚTNICI / THE DESERTER AND THE NOMADS (1968)**. Even the credit sequence breaks down bodies into unrecognizable fragments, which are then concentrated and subjected to surrealist collage reconstitution. A pre-credit sequence features a camp of another kind, this time involving animals, the close-ups of which are eerily cut to the female vocal on another excellent Liska soundtrack.

If Liska's music hinges on the idea of the voice of a woman symbolizing death (a brunette which Herz leaves curiously mute for much of the film), then music and death are inextricably linked in **SPALOVAC MRTVOL**. After all,

music is the only hint of spirituality during the "final journey" in Kopfrkingl's crematorium, (he favors Dvořák, though his tastes are more generally Germanic). Herz even goes so far as to label two minor characters (one German, the other Czech) as Strauss and Dvořák — the latter played by Jiri Menzel.

Kopfrkingl's opening speech on "the good humanitarian state" (that so impresses a Nazi engineer, Reinke) condemns victims of sexually transmitted diseases, in addition, that is, to regaling the imperative nature of disposing of evil and suffering by simply incinerating the perpetrators in a mere 75 minutes. To Kopfrkingl, a physically ill body is the symptom of a corrupt or decadent society. Reinke offers the Nazi solution: Kopfrkingl should get rid of his wife in exchange for access to the company brothel, where only blonde girls are allowed.

Another slip into insanity

After directing an adaptation of Guy de Maupassant's *Little Fly* for Slovak Television, **SLADKÉ HRY MINULÉHO LÉTA / SWEET GAMES OF LAST SUMMER** (1969), Herz's subsequent two films, **PETROLEJOVÉ LAMPY** and **MORGIANA** - both made in 1971 - form a suite in which the director casts a liberal eye on decadence, in terms of behavior, period and décor.

The literary origins of **PETROLEJOVÉ LAMPY** were considerably less abrasive than those of **SPALOVAC MRTVOL**. Though Jaroslav Havlíček's novel is clearly not in the Socialist Realist tradition, as Skvorecky points out, the fact that he'd been dead since 1943 and had therefore not got himself involved in any counter-revolutionary films (as Kundera had, for example) ensured that Herz's production of **PETROLEJOVÉ LAMPY** proceeded relatively smoothly. Opening at the very end of the 19th century, **PETROLEJOVÉ LAMPY** is a romantic, if pessimistic, tale of a girl, Stepa (played by Iva Janžurová), who falls in love with a bitter soldier, Pavel (Petr Cepek), against her family's wishes.

As with **SPALOVAC MRTVOL**, the decadent thematic content of Herz's film has a visual resonance. A thirst for beer, as well as a shocking wardrobe of orange gowns, epitomizes Stepa's indulgences or liberation. The general design of **PETROLEJOVÉ LAMPY** takes its cue from the prints of Alphonse Mucha.

The relationship between Stepa and Pavel is anything but simple. Stepa becomes jealous of the sexual attention Pavel lavishes on her inferior, Magda the servant girl.

However, Stepa is also aware that Pavel has infected Magda with syphilis, the disease which has prompted his leave from the Austrian army. The sequence is voyeuristic, realistic and brutal, anything but romantic. As Peter Hames notes, Magda is just an object for Pavel. Pavel's brother later physically attacks Magda. Magda dies as Pavel slips gradually into insanity, and Stepa's final encounter with her love is in an institution. Pavel's left foaming at the mouth tearing away at his own clothes. Stepa has been left to look after the house of Pavel's father, which is falling further into disrepair. **PETROLEJOVÉ LAMPY** ends on an ambiguous note, with Stepa befriending a child who, unknown to her, is Pavel's daughter.

Two sisters

Herz's next film, **MORGIANA**, is something of a companion piece to **PETROLEJOVÉ LAMPY**, though stylistically it even rivals the excesses of **SPALOVAC MRTVOL**. Based on the story *Jessie and Morgiana* by Aleksandr Grin, the 'Russian Edgar Allan Poe', Morgiana is the story of two sisters, Klára and Viktoria. The setting is 'Grinland,' a hermetic world of decadent excess stranded somewhere between the mid 19th and early 20th century.

Upon their father's death, Klára, the good girl, gets the house, whereas Viktoria, the bad one, gets a pokey lodge. Klára is blonde, popular with the soldiers, if a little boring, whilst Viktoria is ugly, sadistic, bursting with hate and jealousy. If Viktoria once contented herself with clawing out the eyes of a doll made up to look like Klára as a child, now she enacts her revenge by poisoning her. If Herz used orange to extenuate decadent elements in **PETROLEJOVÉ LAMPY**, in **MORGIANA** orange is associated with the madness brought on Klára by her sister's slow-acting poison. Klára sees a double of herself in a dazzling orange dress, and faints at the sight of fruit on the table. Viktoria's impatience manifests itself when she brutally stones a servant girl bathing in the sea, and she is later blackmailed by the woman who sold her the poison.

Morgiana ends with an explicit nod to **SPALOVAC MRTVOL**, with Viktoria staging her own suicide, an act which goes terribly wrong. Whereas Viktoria planned to have the servant girl rush to her hanging body (her final gasps for breath are left silent when her cat, Morgiana, edges through the window, bringing a draft which bangs the door shut. Herz then cheats terribly and reveals that the poison wasn't

terminal after all, and Klára returns to good health, much to the surprise of her vampire-like nurse and dismissive doctor.

Kucera's 'cat's eye' camerawork is particularly fun, as are the prism effects that simulate Klára's hallucinations, first in the villa, then (most spectacularly) a gambling den, and finally a forest. If Klára's poisoning marks a temporary slide into madness, then Viktoria's sick mind is emphasised by a grotesque body. Prior to her successful suicide act, Viktoria removes her wig to reveal a matted, cropped balding head. Lubos Fiser's pounding, repetitive score bludgeons any subtleties left in Herz's direction.

Lacking discipline

Herz emigrated to Germany in 1987, but he returned to the Czech Republic to direct the international co-production **PASÁŽ** (*PASSAGE*, 1998), an adaptation of a Kafkaesque novel by Karel Pecka, first published in 1976. Herz described how he had been instantly attracted to Pecka's novel, going as far as to say that nothing had interested him so much since discovering **SPALOVAC MRTVOL**: "In Pecka's book, I felt moments that were fantastic, drastic, erotic, mysterious, real as well as fictitious." There's no question of Herz being able to film **PASÁŽ** any earlier. Pecka endured eleven years of imprisonment between 1949 and 1960 for distributing political pamphlets. During the 1960s only a few of his novels could be published in his homeland, the majority being printed in Toronto.

PASÁŽ opens like **OTTO E MEZZO** (*FELLINI'S 8 1/2*, 1963) in a traffic jam, though in the rain. Forman (Jacek Borkowski) leaves his broken-down car and heads for an underground entrance. A small girl casts a smile and lures him inside. Inside a toilet he encounters a beautiful blonde prostitute (Malgorzata Kozuchowska) with wicked red heels who screws her clients to death. Following after the little girl, Forman is soon trapped in a labyrinth of shops. It's now past midnight, and Forman exchanges his identity papers for a key giving him access to all areas of the underground.

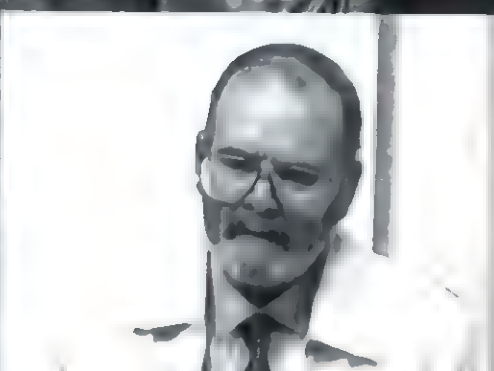
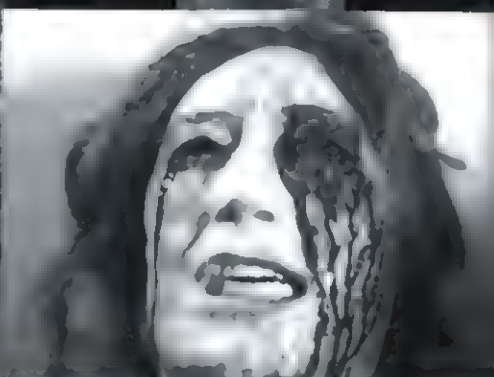
After running into a dead school-friend, Forman witnesses himself hours before on the cinema screen and then goes on to have hot sex with the prostitute, who is now a simple flower-seller. Just as the viewer decides that Forman must be insane, Herz ends the film where it began, except this time he reveals Forman to be an actor in a film about his own recent experiences. As the director has said, "I enjoy playing with reality and fiction, with the film as an illusion as well

as with the film as a reality. I like the story to end in some way and a certain doubt to creep in with the final full-stop".

Whilst unquestionably spectacular, **PASÁŽ** lacks the discipline that governed the excesses of Herz's earlier films. One factor is a rather weak score by Zdenek Merta — definitely no Liska.

Ironically, while Herz never experienced the full wrath of the censors of the Czech authorities (unlike Jakubisko, Nemec and Chytilová) his later work has, by his own admission, suffered under the influence of television editors, producers, not to mention financiers in the West. However, Herz's outlook is positive, though one inflected by the sentiment that if the Western market-place is based upon freedom, then that freedom often fails to provide talented producers, actors or scriptwriters.





ON SET WITH LUCIO FULCI: the filming of DEMONIA

by Alan Jones

Over the years, I've heard more funny stories about the antics of director Lucio Fulci than practically anyone else. My favourite, and least libellous - the reason why I can print it here - was told to me by David Warbeck, star of **THE BEYOND** and **THE BLACK CAT**. Fulci has had more than his share of personal tragedy during his long lifetime. Divorce, fatal accidents, suicide, alcoholism, gambling debts and heart attacks have been intercut into his directing career like some berserk soap-opera. I often wonder how he found the time to become so prolific with all these family problems.

But while he was filming **THE BLACK CAT**, Fulci enjoyed one of the more peaceful periods of his life. He had a new girlfriend - a fifty-year old sex therapist - who accompanied him on the set at all times. As Warbeck tells it, the crew could set their watches by Fulci calling a halt to shooting. Daily he would complain of nervous exhaustion and demand 'treatment' from his new love who would then disappear with him into the confines of his location trailer. As everyone stood around waiting for action to resume, the 'action' began in the trailer! The caravan would bounce up and down for about ten minutes until Fulci emerged refreshed from his invigorating 'massage'. Nobody was fooled but Fulci continued the pretence with a striking unabashed wilfulness.

Fulci is well past his prime now. Gone are the heady days of **ZOMBIE FLESH-EATERS**, **CITY OF THE LIVING DEAD** and **THE NEW YORK RIPPER**. But proof that this story is just one in a very long catalogue of hilarious anecdotes comes hot from the set of **DEMONIA** which Fulci began shooting December 1989 in Sicily. At the time of writing it may be retitled **LIZA** and has yet to finish dubbing and post-production. **DEMONIA** is film number 120 for Fulci. The one before it - **WHEN ALICE BROKE THE LOOKING GLASS** - will apparently never be released due to some impossibly complex law suit. Brett Halsey starred in

ALICE and he also headlines **DEMONIA** with American Meg Register, Belgian Pascal Durant, Italian Ettore Comi, and American Grady T. Clarkson who provided these eye-opening reminiscences.

Clarkson, a poet and performing artist, moved to Rome to help press officer Eugene Rizzo promote **THE ADVENTURES OF BARON MUNCHAUSEN**. That's how we met. But he soon found he could augment this unreliable career with sporadic acting assignments. In Italy he's played a sports commissioner in Charles Band's **ARENA**, a witchfinder general in Roger Corman's **FRANKENSTEIN UNBOUND**, an architect in the mini-series "Michelangelo" with Ornella Muti, and a voice-over in Roland Joffe's **SHADOWMAKERS**. Clarkson laughed, "For the latter I had to stand in a recording studio differently emoting the words Nagasaki and Hiroshima over and over again!" Clarkson helped Rizzo with Luigi Cozzi's homage to Argento's **SUSPIRIA** and **INFERNO**, **EDGAR ALLAN POE'S THE BLACK CAT** - starring Brett Halsey. Halsey's career has suddenly been revitalised in Italy. Although he appeared in such American product as **RETURN TO PEYTON PLACE**, **CRY BABY KILLER** and **TWICE TOLD TALES**, his spaghetti western appearances and quickie roles, like **SPY IN YOUR EYE**, endeared him to the Italian public more.

"For **DEMONIA** I was auditioned by Camila Fulci, Lucio's daughter and assistant", began Clarkson. "At the time I had no idea what the film was or what part I was up for. Two days later I was called back to be videotaped by Fulci himself and that set the seal on the whole dreadful affair because it was impossible to understand his English at all. Then I found out I was to play one of two brothers. I had been given a script but there was no mention of brothers anywhere and I couldn't work it out. It turned out the confusion stemmed from bad script translation. One line was "Here, boy, here I am" but in the Italian draft it read

"Here, brother, here I am". I was still very confused because the brothers had different surnames in both scripts! Fulci and Piero Regnoli wrote the screenplay." (Regnoli, co-scripter of **I VAMPIRI** with Riccardo Freda, directed **THE PLAYGIRLS AND THE VAMPIRE**, **SAMSON IN KING SOLOMON'S MINES** and numerous sexploitation, western and peplum items.)

"I play Sean Kinsella, an Irish archaeologist with a bad drinking problem", continued Clarkson. "You can't fail to notice that because in every scene I have a whiskey bottle in my hand. This production was so cheap let me tell you - well, budget conscious! - the whiskey was really watered down tea. And they asked me not to drink it during the takes because they couldn't afford to make any more! Other times it was diluted Coke, a very bad mixture causing gastric problems. So I didn't drink that either. What sort of film are you making when you have to fake drinking fake booze!"

Clarkson outlined the **DEMONIA** story. "Archaeologists go off to Sicily to study a Greek ruin. The location was Monte Castello and it has never been filmed before. Liza, one of the group, went to a seance prior to the journey and had connected with the demon spirit of a nun crucified by the locals for witchcraft back in 1320. Liza becomes possessed as a result and the group end up right next door to the monastery where this sex-crazed nun and her co-nunettes used to hold orgies with young Sicilian lads. As the boys climaxed they were murdered and the nuns drank their blood in a religious frenzy. But after the villagers crucified the nuns they didn't take their bodies off the crosses before walling them up inside the monastery. So through Liza their evil spirits roam murdering everyone in grisly ways. Actually one way - a spike, a harpoon, or a meat-hook through the neck, a fabulous premise, you'll agree. Liza is played by Virginia born Meg Register. And it really isn't a joke when I tell you I kept forgetting her name because she just didn't register!"

According to Clarkson the whole **DEMONIA** experience was a nightmare from start to finish. He explained, "We were told we would be flown to Sicily but I wanted to go by train to see some of the countryside. The time came to go and suddenly we got this call saying the film was off. Some journalist had written an article in a local paper saying we were about to make a porno film. All permits were therefore yanked and they had to postpone for about a week to prove to the authorities it was indeed a horror film. Every day from then on we kept hearing new arrangements. It was

impossible to plan anything and then less than 24 hours before filming began we were ferried to Naples, put on an overnight boat-trip to Palermo and then driven to the location on the South coast at Sciacca" (pronounced Sha-kah).

He continued, "We were put up in the Grand Hotel delle Terme, named after a nearby spa fountain, which was anything but. All we had in the bare rooms were towels and toilet paper. The first night I had this gorgeous room facing the Mediterranean, but the producer had done such a cheap deal with the hotel, I was turfed out to make way for a convention party. I ended up sharing with Ettore. Pascal was supposed to complete our threesome but he got pissed off and went to stay somewhere else at his own expense. How he could afford it I'll never know. We were only on a low salary plus meals and daily expenses of 50,000 lira (£40). There was no heat for the first few days. I was so cold I recorded the howling wind on tape so that people would believe me. The sound engineer eventually asked for a copy of this to use in the film!"

Filming commenced and events got crazier by the minute. Clarkson revealed, "Pascal and I were supposed to sing an Irish song around a campfire. There was no indication in the script as to what song we should be singing or the mood we were supposed to be in. Hours before filming I remembered Molly Malone - inaccurately as it turned out, while Pascal coped with learning a few guitar chords. But what the hell, we were supposed to be drunk, weren't we? Then we were supposed to break into an Irish jig, spelt 'gig' in the script, and we had to get a few steps down. I was lucky I could remember Fred Astaire in **FINIAN'S RAINBOW** or I don't know what we would have done."

He continued "Then at the monastery location, I learned I had to fall down a fifteen feet deep hole in a drunken stupor after witnessing ghostly apparitions of nuns on a seduction rampage. The one stuntman had conveniently disappeared. Pascal had to fall onto spikes first and then I had to land on top of him and also get impaled. Pascal, a handsome boy with red hair, was very scared about this and decided to let me do all the hard work. If Pascal actually took the trouble to learn his lines, he'd go far in this business! It was dark, I had lights in my eye-line, and Fulci refused to give me a mark because it would show up on camera. I had to stumble forward blindly then fake a fall and drop out of frame. But I couldn't see where the hole was! I didn't want to be a casualty, so Fulci kept complaining it looked like I was watching where I was going. Of course I

was! Wouldn't you? Then they built a quick platform and stacked mattresses three deep at the bottom of the hole. The cameraman lay on the ground next to them for a falling slow-motion shot. I was angry but I knew I had to get it over with. I did my first jump and came within inches of smashing my head open. I jumped six times in all, and then realised it was basically camera rehearsal practise. It was a long, boring and complicated sequence which took all day to shoot. But no-one seemed to care - everyone was so engrossed in making paper cut-outs of nuns to dangle in front of the lights! That was the main priority, not my health and security."

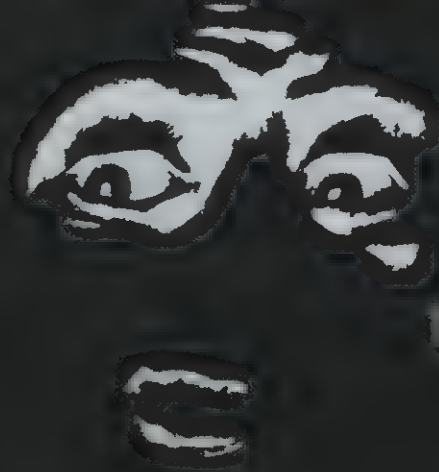
At least Clarkson enjoyed working with Brett Halsey. And he got a job offer out of him too, as he explained. "Brett plays the head archaeologist. He's a friend of Liza's and she's his student. Brett is really amusing about his past career, the Ma and Pa Kettle series and the daytime soap General Hospital. He said to me one day, 'You know, they kept calling me this great surgeon, but every one of my patients died!' I ended up loving Brett. He worked a lot in Italy during the sixties and a few years ago he published his memoirs about those times in Rome. Steve Reeves is there under the pseudonym Rex and he has loads of stories about Clint Eastwood."

DEMONIA ends with the evil nun burnt at the stake and Liza materializing dead. Clarkson feels the same should happen to Fulci. But he wouldn't have missed the experience for the world, as he now has endless dinner party repartee. He said, "The whole film was a shambles. I'd heard all the stories about Fulci and now I know they're true. There was a vague semblance of a movie being made but the main problem was no producer support. Fulci is an interesting character though, despite never talking to the actors. We had one meeting with him a day before shooting began. We were all summoned into a hotel room and he communicated through Camila. I swear if he'd had his way the whole thing would have lasted five minutes. He said 'I'm here to meet you because I won't be spending much time with you once we start filming. Brett Halsey will be doing some re-writes because the script language is not good English, it's just a literal translation.' I grabbed him and said 'Do you want an Irish accent?' He nodded yes as he vanished into the distance. And that was about all the direction I got." But Clarkson did get one indication Fulci liked what he was doing. He continued, "The crew always ate together as a morale boosting exercise. Fulci never said a word but one day he smiled at me and patted me on the back. That's the only recognition I got. On set he's disorgan-

ised and screams abusively a lot. Actually he screams at everyone all the time. It's not necessarily an angry scream, often it's tinged with humour, but it gets very tiring after a short while. The louder he gets the harder he is to understand and none of the crew escapes the wrath of Fulci. There's one image of him I'll always treasure, it's so perfect. We were out at the Greek ruin walking along this lovely lane they'd built. I glanced up to see Fulci walking ahead of the company. He opened up his fly and pissed all over the road as he walked along deep in thought. I'll never know why his trousers didn't get soaked!"

The most alarming of Clarkson's **DEMONIA** stories though nearly cost him his life. He explained "We were shooting a scene where Pascal and I are just dead bodies covered with bloody sheets. As our feet were the only things visible, I couldn't quite grasp why doubles weren't loaded into an ambulance instead! This took up most of the morning and as Pascal and I didn't have another shot for ten days we decided to take the time off for a holiday in Sciacca. So myself, Ettore, Justine and Christina - two extras - got into this car to head back to the hotel. Our driver, Enzo, started speeding alarmingly because he kept cruising the two girls. He lost control on one of the winding coast roads, slid into a ditch and we landed upside down. We had to crawl through the back window, but luckily no-one was hurt. To this day, Enzo hasn't apologised. Anyway, Enzo called the hotel for another car. About an hour later Alessandra Spagnuolo, the producer's daughter, came down the road, lost control and crashed on the other side of the street! Very shaken, we got dumped off at Palermo and finally got back to Rome. Pascal and I decided to share a taxi and we started telling the cab driver about the wreck. Suddenly this truck full of wooden cartons stopped dead in front of us and the load fell on top of the taxi. The cab driver turned to me and said 'I think you'd better stay home today!'"

After that Clarkson wanted to forget about **DEMONIA** and get back to writing press notes. But unfortunately he can't - not just yet anyway. He concluded, "I'm under this terrible threat - Fulci may call us back for reshoots. After filming the gore effects at De Paolis Studios, Fulci edited the film and found it was ten minutes short of a proper running time. So not only will I soon have to dub the film, but I can't shave off my itchy beard because of continuity in case he needs pick-up shots. Will the nightmare never end? The only thing worse than watching a Lucio Fulci movie seems to be appearing in one!"



VIRUS

VIRAL DRAMAS

by *Marcelle Perks*

People often ask questions like 'So why *do* you like horror?', glossing over centuries of real life atrocities in history, as if anything untoward was alien to the human race. As if these things had never happened: Edward the II's murder via a red hot poker up the arse; the disease ridden slums of 19th century Britain where the life expectancy for a male was 19; the holocaust. And we have never been good at facing up to mankind's greatest adversity, the invisible enemy in the form of viruses and bacteria.

Since our origins, various mutations of a 'piece of nucleic acid surrounded by bad news' and the sometimes deadly presence of bacteria have been a continual pestilence, and yet in everything, from our mythology to old wives tales, this is barely acknowledged. The legacy of the Black Death is a nursery rhyme and a few woodcuts of the Dance of Death. The 1918 Influenza pandemic, which killed around 100 million people, is a curiosity, a forgotten episode virtually unmentioned in newspapers, history books, and even medical material.

Those viral outbreak films ostensibly tackling the nature of the beast head on, often fail to give viruses a true mythic/monster status, with titles that personify disease as an instrument of evil as in **THE SATAN BUG** (1965), **GERMICIDE** (1974), **THE MAD DEATH** (1983) and **CONTAGIOUS** (1997). Very little attention is given to the contagion's potency or visible effects. Like Frankenstein's monster, our real concerns about pestilence have become blurred - the spectre of white gowned soldiers with gas masks (who are meant to be on our side but act otherwise) has become the symbol representing the plague problem. In the meantime, our real paranoia about viral and bacterial contagion has been displaced elsewhere, in the more comforting eschewal of familiar semi-human mythic figures: vampires, werewolves, and Frankenstein's Monster, which after all, don't really exist.

The very idea of horror is inexplicably linked with infection, both viral and spiritual. Whilst vampire and werewolf myths date from antiquity, from the 1800s the birth of the novel and subsequent popularity of works like *Varney the Vampire* (1847), *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1897) and *Wagner: The Wehr-Wolf* (1846) gave a personalised face to old fears. Though transformed, both werewolves and vampires retain recognisable human elements and they multiply by oral infection, so we can see shape-shifting and fang fetishism as a disease metaphor. Not that this is a new idea: as far back as the eighteenth century, Christopher Frayling has demonstrated that philosophers in Paris and London had figured out that vampirism is really about the spread of contagious diseases. The myths attained a wider popularity with the advent of cinema, where the addition of a highly charged eroticism added a certain degree of fascination. Fritz Lang presents a representation of death as a *femme fatale* in **DIE PEST IN FLORENZ** aka **THE PLAGUE** (1919), who raises jealous passions in both the ruler of a city and his son - in the ensuing conflict everyone succumbs to plague. Films with Dracula in the title inevitably succumb to erotic titillation, an element that masks the original fear behind the myth, making it more palatable. Do not underestimate the fear of the unsightedly diseased, as demonstrated by the continued currency of the term 'leper', despite the fact the disease disappeared from Europe in the fifteenth century! The Dracula and Werewolf myth probably recall an earlier era when peasants were ruled by the feudal aristocracy, encapsulating the idea of a powerful, evil overlord, sadistic and wayward, with proclivities for rape and other exploitative behaviour.

The idea of the courtly vampire, in film, however, was quickly replaced by other types, and in the fifties and sixties science fiction elements entered the genre. The publication of *I am Legend* by Richard Matheson in 1954 marked a water-

shed towards a more literal interpretation of the vampire myth as metaphor for disease, and magnified the disease to a global scale. In the film version **THE LAST MAN ON EARTH** (1964), Vincent Price plays Morgan, the only man not infected by a vampire-like virus that has overtaken the rest of the world, and he monotonously kills what is left of his fellow 'men' on a daily basis. A group of scientists find a drug to keep the disease in abeyance, which, if they had used Morgan's 'pure blood', could have produced a cure. Alas, society is too far gone, and the only solution is to kill Morgan, who in this new society has become 'the monster'. In the remake, **THE OMEGA MAN** (1971), Charlton Heston painstakingly creates a vaccine from his own blood to prevent the creatures from 'turning', only to be ultimately overwhelmed and have all his efforts, and the cure, come to nought. In both films the death of this single man signals the end of civilisation as we know it, and the application of his scientific techniques and ritual blood giving (i.e. the trappings of modern medicine) do no good.

In 1968 the dead achieved a new significance in George Romero's groundbreaking **NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD**, where the creatures wanted much more than blood, they fought each other for intestines, flesh and organs. A far cry from the traditional image of the undead, their fervour and unstoppable momentum, *en masse*, pre-figured the apocalyptic mood of the seventies where the paranoid disaster movie reigned supreme. In the face of a perceived global pandemic or chemical/nuclear disaster, the traditional vampire that caused havoc on a local level was displaced. Critic Gregory Waller suggests the essence of the vampire myth was transmuted to that of the zombie. Before **NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD**, the Zombie myth was little used and usually associated with Haitian folklore, but after the success of Romero's low budget film, the vampire-cannibal-zombie overlap became a staple in horror. The disease metaphor was itself now highly virulent, of global proportions, with no likely cure and none of the old-world trappings of a cross or garlic to save us. The fact that these films are usually kick-started by some man-made adversity suggests that, rather than being fantasy, the theme is prophetic. Ultrasound devices create **THE LIVING DEAD AT THE MANCHESTER MORGUE** (1974), leaking toxic waste gives rise to **THE RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD** (1985) and even the hazard of distributing viruses via global travel is explored by the ferocious zombie airplane passengers who disembark in **GOKE - BODY SNATCHER FROM**

HELL (1968), **CITY OF THE WALKING DEAD** (1980) and **ZOMBIE 90: EXTREME PESTILENCE** (1990).

As the traditional myths became more aggressive, with cannibalistic overtones, they were accompanied by a corresponding increase in the use of nudity and sexuality, so that the mutilation of a body became equated with a kind of extra-forceful sexual rape. Enter the new world of so-called 'body horror' popularised by Canadian director David Cronenberg. In **SHIVERS** (1976), a protruding, penis-like parasite is spread, virus-like, by sexual contact and turns the inhabitants of a luxury apartment complex into sex-crazed zombies. A thinly-disguised metaphor for the worried well's angst-ridden belief that 'something is wrong with me', it also serves to highlight fears in an increasingly ageist society about the threat of impending death, disease and physical corruption. We are told that: "*disease is the love of two alien kinds of creatures for each other, that even dying is an act of eroticism.*" In Cronenberg's next film, **RABID** (1977), viral contagion is again equated with sexuality, through porn actress Marilyn Chambers as Rose, who after being the recipient of revolutionary new skin grafts, develops a protruding vampire 'fang' under her arm through which she slakes her need for blood. Those she attacks go on to incubate an extremely virulent form of rabies, causing bizarre, violent behaviour and then death. Meshing the best *femme fatale* style of traditional vampire movies with a contemporary angst about the ethics of scientific research, ultimately the horror in **RABID** is conveyed through the demise of the lead protagonist, and not the fate of the millions caught up in the tragedy. After conducting an ill-fated 'experiment' with one of her victims to find out if she has indeed caused the death of hundreds of people, the film closes with Rose's dead body being thrown in the back of a rubbish removal van.

The werewolf myth has not proved as durable in modern society as that of the vampire. **THE WOLFMAN** (1941), based on the novel by Guy Endore, remains the most imitated version of the legend, but the essence of this myth, the idea of a shape-shifter who outwardly appears normal but is not all he seems, assumed a new urgency in narratives about aliens. In films like **INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS** (1956), and its remake in 1978, together with **BODY SNATCHERS** (1993), the narrative is driven by the new horror of actually seeing the mechanical process of bodily replication. Viruses are invisible to the naked eye, but the creation of alien substitutes, factory style, mimics -

complete with branching tendrils - the process of viral replication on a large scale format. The literal presentation of this process embodies fears about viral contact that previously had only been imagined. Later films would see aliens with the means to transform the entire human race, with skin stretched to horrifying proportions, in films like John Carpenter's **THE THING** (1982) and **ALIEN** (1979). With inflated budgets, the new trend for graphic body horror, and the development of special effects techniques, it was possible to bring to life fears about transformation which had never before been possible. In **THE THING**, a scientific community in the Antarctic unleash an alien from its icy grave and find themselves pitted against a terrifying adversary. At first they are not aware of its power of replication, and by the time they understand what is happening it is no longer possible to visibly identify who is or is not 'the Thing'. Whereas the Body Snatcher substitutes were immediately detectable, the horror of this shape-shifter lies in its perfect, awe-inspiring replication and ability to carry out its intention to overtake the entire human race. Against this infinitely superior enemy, the men pit together, and as a group incinerate the unseen fiend. Unlike the vampire and zombie films with their distrust in groups, the ending signals human ingenuity and continued survival.

THE THING used an all-male cast and an heroic upbeat ending to off-set the primal fear it tapped, but in Ridley Scott's **ALIEN** (1979) the alien imagery was sexualised (which also means getting to see particularly intimate shots of the female lead, played by Sigourney Weaver). The horror of **ALIEN** is that it is presented as a superior species. Rather than wishing to replicate us, this 'biomechanoid' fusion of human and mechanical elements is the most original looking monster ever. Unbelievably strong (its blood is pure acid that makes holes in the ship's steel) and sexually virile (it forcibly impregnates the mostly male crew), all that we need to know about this monster is that it is unbeatable at achieving its prime objective, reproduction and survival. These transformation narratives represent the disease metaphor at its purest, the aliens in principle behaving like animated life-size viruses. In real life, a virus really is like something out of a horror film. It is neither living or dead, consisting of floating bits of genetic material that only come to life when they invade the cell of a plant, animal or bacterium and hijack its life support system to reproduce itself. Sound familiar? Viral and bacterial ingenuity is the result of its simplicity (it has around 10 genes compared to

the 5,000 genes of even the smallest bacteria). The 'perfect simplicity' of the creatures in **ALIEN** and **THE THING**, and their ability to replicate, parallels this feat of nature. Bacterial contagion like the bubonic plague imitates the body's own lung cells, and then once incorporated, set in motion a cycle of destruction, not unlike the havoc wreaked by these filmic aliens.

The publication of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) introduced a new myth which tapped into fears about the rise of medical science and 'progress'. In some ways a reaction against the onset of the Industrial Revolution and its hastily developed metropolises, it also incorporated contemporary scientific discovery; rumours that Darwin had brought a worm back to life, the new science of galvanism that used electrical energy to stimulate living things. Regarded as the first 'science fiction' novel, it introduces the idea of a monster as an unnatural being. Even back then, when science was in its infancy, the awful possibilities of science were as strong a fascination as its power for good. The creator was just as frightening as his creation, as well as being culpable, and Thomas Edison's **FRANKENSTEIN** (1910) portrayed the Doctor as a mad scientist, complete with bubbling witch-like cauldron. Unlike the other mythic figures, Frankenstein has not been imitated much in writing, but has developed a life of its own in the twentieth century's most popular medium - film. James Whale's **FRANKENSTEIN** (1931) concentrated on the horrifying, clumsy appearance of the monster (so successful it remains an icon even today) and spawned many imitations. Like the Werewolf myth, multiple variants become derivative, and traditional workings of the myth go in and out of vogue. What has endured, however, is the image of the mad scientist, a staple ingredient in the genre; Andrew Tudor reckons that, taking into account mad scientist characters, 35% of all horror movies use this theme. After the development of germ warfare, films did not even have to create an individual mad scientist figure in the Frankenstein mould, like Fu Manchu or Dr Orloff - it was enough to show someone in decontamination gear to get the point across.

At first, the potential for a deliberate viral outbreak was down to the evil intent of some outsider. One of the first films to deal with the problem of an epidemic is Elia Kazan's **PANIC IN THE STREETS** (1950) where police hunt for two gangsters infected with pneumonic plague. Likewise, in **THE SATAN BUG** (1965) we see the chase of a man who has

stolen flasks of a deadly virus, but in both films the threat is not realised. However, Robert Wise's **THE ANDROMEDA STRAIN** (1971) and George Romero's **THE CRAZIES** (1973) the killer plague that's unleashed is the direct result of government germ warfare experiments, and the military armed response is as frightening as the virus itself. In **THE CRAZIES**, frightening white clad soldiers in gas masks turn up almost immediately after a bacterial weapon is accidentally released into a town's water supply. The soldiers are depicted almost like aliens, shot at unnatural angles with their masks rendering their speech almost unintelligible. They round up all the local populace with no explanation and force the fire brigade to let people's houses burn. The military blunder through the crisis, culminating in the death of the scientist who discovers an antidote, as a result of intervention by the guards supposedly protecting the facility. The outcome is bleak.

In the big budget **CASSANDRA CROSSING** (1976), the military response to the outbreak of a chemically engineered strain of bubonic plague couldn't be scarier. When the train, which has been infiltrated by plague infected terrorists, is allowed to stop, it is met by a line of motionless white suited guards with guns who dramatically seal the train. This authoritarian measure is made more evocative through the perspective of an Auschwitz survivor whose terror convinces a small team, led by Richard Harris, to escape. Only a small group survive, with the rest sent to their deaths over an old bridge that buckles, ironically spilling their contaminated corpses into the water supply. Similarly, in **RAGE** (1972) after a nerve gas leak from the military kills a rancher's son, the real horror is the way the incident is hushed up. For those in the front line, god forbid that a leakage occur in one's own facility - in **WARNING SIGN** (1985), after an accident at a biological weapons laboratory, the complex's security system automatically seals the building, trapping the workers inside. Likewise, **THE PLAGUE** (1993) concerns the fate of three men left sealed in a quarantined city.

The decontamination suit has become such a symbol of fear, that when the strangely uncommunicative suited team appear before rat besieged survivors in **RATS, NIGHT OF TERROR** (1983), it is not too much of a surprise when we discover the 'rescuers' are man-sized rats. Anything in one of those suits is bad news. By the time Terry Nation came to create the BBC TV serial *Blakes 7* (1978-81), all he had to do to design a uniform representing a totalitarian regime was to make decontamination suits black.

Ironically, despite the greater censorship in this format, television has produced some of the most innovative and controversial material on the subject. One of the puzzles of the last century was the muted silence from all quarters on the greatest viral catastrophe in recorded history, the 1918 Influenza virus that killed, at conservative estimates, at least 50 million people. Instead of spawning a new horror motif that would become part of folklore, a dread to be handed down the generations, it was virtually unmentioned in the official history of the time. However, it did provide a startling backdrop for several British screenwriters bent on making the new genre of sci-fi television into prime-time viewing. Indeed the telefantasy format was to prove the medium for contemporary Malthusians and ecologists alike, who obviously wanted to get to us when we were young. Where would we be without our very own Terry Nation? Not only did he invent the indomitable Dalek monsters for *Doctor Who*, he also created an epic 39 episode series, *The Survivors* (1975-77), about a mutant strain of man-made influenza that wipes out 99% of the world's population in a single hit. Only the first episode was spent chronicling the onset of the disease (most films come to a convenient close when disaster is realised) - the rest of the 38 episodes were unique in developing the notion of post-apocalyptic survival as TV fare. The eponymous survivors had to become self sufficient, and although influenza was the initial killer (no doubt influenced by the pandemic outbreaks of 1957 and 1968) the series chronicled some of the unpleasant fates and diseases such a new society would face.

In one episode, *Gone to the Angels*, when lead character Abbey searches for her son, she unwittingly infects a religious group who have been in retreat since the onset of the flu. As well as having their deaths on her conscience, she realises that if her son is still alive because he has been isolated, when she finds him the exposure could kill him. In *Greater Love*, Paul contracts bubonic plague after heroically going into the city to fetch drugs for a sick woman. Although the community take the cautious step of quarantining him in a barn, his lover, Ruth the doctor, is forced to burn him whilst he is still alive. If she had waited until his death, the fleas would have quickly found new hosts, infecting everyone. We learn some harsh statistics along the way: in *Lights of London* Ruth is abducted in an attempt to force her to treat what's left of London's sick, and her entrapment is justified on the basis that unless there are at least 500 individuals from which to reproduce, it is not possible for

the human race to survive - we would die out in a few generations. (Obviously, the optimism expressed in post-apocalyptic nightmares like **DAY OF THE DEAD** (1985), where three people hope to find a desert island and start afresh, "make some babies", is horribly flawed). Similarly, in *The Last Laugh*, Greg contracts smallpox (which, incidentally, killed 300 million people in the last century) which is so contagious that even if the victims are burned and their ashes buried, their remains are contagious for 50 years. (NB: according to virologist Professor Albert Heim, this is untrue.)

The series was uneven in its approach to the problem of contagion, which is expressed through the interaction of fledgling communities. The harsher elements were mainly penned by Jack Ronder, whilst other writers found meaningful roles for Doctors of Philosophy and men of the cloth. Although from the second season the series focused more on pastoral hardships, it was one of the first TV serial productions where outside broadcast cameras were used, and its gritty realism and harsh subject matter consistently reinforced the ecological message. It is definitely a world away from the flu pandemic aftermath in Mike Garris's **THE STAND** (1994) (from the novel by Stephen King) where symbolic notions of good and evil drive the narrative. But then in general, English telefantasy is more hardhitting than its American counterpart. The aforementioned *Blakes 7* gave us a lethal plague in *Killer*, a brutal totalitarian dictatorship, with a lead character initially accused of child-molesting - and this was a series aimed at children! It chronicled all manner of new weapons, but the deliberately introduced plague in *Children of Aeon*, courtesy of Servelan, had particularly graphic consequences. The victims died with horribly bubo-crusted faces. By contrast, in the classic *Star Trek* series (1966-69) the many and varied diseases they encounter are of the Mickey Mouse variety: whatever they catch, Bones is somehow able to reverse its effects without consequences.

Another innovative British series is *Doomwatch* (1970-72) which like *The Survivors*, was produced by Terence Dudley. Regarded as the first 'green' TV series, it was created by former surgeon/pathologist Kit Pedler, together with Gerry Davis, the same team who invented *Doctor Who*'s half-man, half-machine menaces, the Cybermen. Described as 'sci-fact', *Doomwatch* was a personal project that grew out of their private concerns and questioned the ethics of misused science. In Pedler's words, "When we

started it, the clear object of the series was to make serious comment about the dangerous facts of science, which should be drawn to the public attention". Through the creation of a fictional government department, it monitored the potential dangers of scientific discovery, covering such diverse topics as acid rain, genetics, noise pollution and over-crowding, as well as viruses. The first episode, *The Plastic Eaters*, featured a new type of virus that attacked plastics, and it breaks out (courtesy of an irresponsible scientist) dramatically onboard a plane. (Professor Heim points out that although a virus that eats plastic is impossible, as it needs living cells to replicate, a bacterium - in theory - could.) Viewers were treated to scenes of melting green slime and the spectacle of a plane not so much crashing as melting, a new type of virus for a new age. The series struck a chord with the public, with 'doomwatch' becoming a new word in the English language and netting 12 million viewers in its first run, a record for the time. It was not afraid to kill off its protagonists and in *Fire and Brimstone* a member of the trusted Doomwatch team is driven mad by toxic fumes, and threatens to unleash an anthrax epidemic. In other words, anyone can create a catastrophe. One episode, *Sex and Violence*, featuring real execution footage, was never screened in the UK. Such TV material showed the potential problems of virus outbreaks without using mythic metaphors to soften the blow, but this sort of challenging television was as rare as it was innovative, and both *The Survivors* and *Doomwatch* remain largely neglected series that have fallen outside of mainstream culture.

Meanwhile in real life, the newly emerging filo virus, Ebola, and its sensational ravaging effects - not unlike the bloody deaths in **CONTAMINATION** (1980) - provided a new anxiety and a best seller for Richard Preston, with his non-fiction book *The Hot Zone* (1994). A subsequent Hollywood film, **OUTBREAK** (1995), tried to cash in on this success, but its use of thriller genre elements turned it into more of a medical detective story. In the Hong-Kong film **EBOLA SYNDROME** aka **YIBOLA BING DU** (1996), the threat of disease is mere titillation to create the ultimate rape revenge story: a restaurant employee rapes and murders his victims, later serving the meat in the restaurant and inadvertently spreading the virus. In Terry Gilliam's **TWELVE MONKEYS** (1995), an awareness of the level IV Ebola virus is reflected in Bruce Willis's unimaginably elaborate decontamination suit, and the extreme caution which must be taken just to explore the outside, disease-

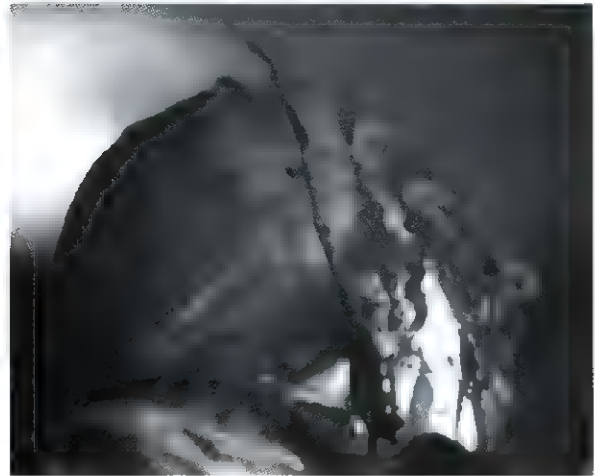
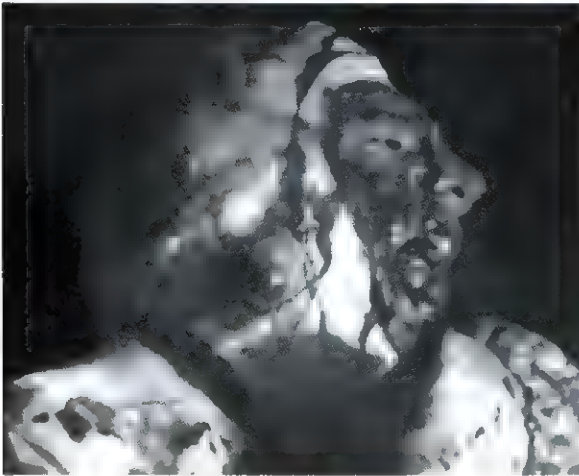
ravaged world (a rubber fetishist's delight with lingering shots of latex underwear). Real events like the spread of the AIDS virus, depicted in films like **AND THE BAND PLAYED ON** (1993) and the defection of former Soviet germ warfare scientist Ken Alibek, brought awareness of the potential threat from germ warfare, or a newly emerging virus, to an all-time high. The result was a wave of largely inferior films, featuring the need to prevent the spread of a contagious disease. Usually the medical protagonists are pitted against terrorists, as in **JERICHO FEVER** (1993) but occasionally the genre throws up a good old fashioned natural disaster, as in **CONTAGIOUS** (1997), where infected prawns on an airline (ever the virus vehicle of choice) leads to an outbreak of cholera. The problem with these films is that they have become derivative, simply a subgenre. One of the most interesting recent films on the subject was Lars Von Trier's self-relexive **EPIDEMIC** (1996) where Von Trier and his writer Niels Vørsel, playing themselves, are writing a script about an epidemic yet failing to see that it is actually spreading around them.

There exist only a handful of films that really show the devastating effects of a virus in technicolour. The fate that befalls the team of scientists in the opening scenes of **CONTAMINATION** (1980) is perhaps the goriest in screen history, with men literally exploding from the inside, but as this is the result of investigating alien eggs, the sci-fi element prevents it being too real. Again, only the opening ten minutes of Albert Pyun's **ADRENALIN - FEAR THE RUSH** (1996) are worth seeing, with a docudrama showing stunning tracking shots of an abandoned hospital littered with bloody corpses. Unfortunately, the rest of the film fails to live up to this early promise. Kinji Fukasaku's big budget film **VIRUS** (1980) (the most expensive in Japanese history) does an effective job in conveying total destruction after a virus is released from communist East Germany. The only survivors are a scientific team in Antarctica where the climate protects them, but the film focuses on other threats (such as the US's nuclear weapons which are likely to destroy them later) and ultimately this is a film about cold war paranoia, with the ravaging virus a secondary theme. It seems that if you want to see the menace of an airborne threat visualised, straightforward virus films don't deliver. Your best bet is to see a film from an entirely different genre, like John Carpenter's **THE FOG** (1980), where supernatural apparitions are able to physically materialise from a luminous fog bank. Once again, only through metaphors can this ancient dread be explored.

After September the 11th, the threat of a global pandemic seems much closer, and you can expect a slew of viral-related dilemmas to appear soon on a screen near you. The first off the bat include the British drama documentary, **SMALLPOX** (2002), a pre-construction of what would happen if a lone terrorist released smallpox, which was officially eradicated by immunisation in 1976, but exists in secret germ warfare labs. Muted, and covering events only on a small scale, significantly it shows very little of the symptoms of the disease, concentrating on individuals' attempts to avoid infection. It simply is not of the calibre of **THREADS** (1984) which graphically and unflinchingly chronicled a woman's grim existence after a nuclear war. A new German TV movie about the black death, **PEST - DIE RÜCKKEHR**, aired in February 2002. In the face of an almost-real threat, it will be interesting to see whether we confront our fears head on.

Whilst the fear of infection has been represented through multiple transfiguring myths in film and TV, the really scary thought is that, rather than being an enemy we must destroy, viruses may exist in a symbiotic relationship with us; a knowledge that is surely innate. There's been a high price to pay for every step of progress away from our natural 'hunter gatherer' mode. When farming was introduced, so was anthrax in the breakup of the soil, and close contact with livestock introduced new human diseases still at large today: measles (from dogs), diphtheria and tuberculosis (from cows), the common cold (from horses), chickenpox (from chickens), and influenza (from pigs and ducks). The creation of cities in turn created epidemics, and global travel gave us pandemics. Medical historian Andrew Nikiforuk, suggests "*mankind is the architect of its own viruses*" by the way we change our living conditions "*... the earth's first-line defence mechanism will only tolerate so much crowding, pollution and deforestation...*"

In a harsh kind of way, the greatest medical disaster on record, the Black Death pandemic of 1348-50, which killed 30 million (the effects have been compared to the effects of a nuclear war) did us a favour. Without these deaths, life would quickly have become intolerable, because population growth, which tripled between 700-1250, was causing massive degradation and deforestation of land. It seems the only thing worse than viruses is to imagine life without them, and perhaps this explains the ready personification in our myths and subcultures of this harsh ally.



stills from Cozzi's *CONTAMINATION*

WARNING: HM DOCTORS NOTICE

NB. Virologist Professor Albert Heim of Hanover Medical School writes. "Both bacteria and viruses can cause diseases, but most authors, directors and producers do not care about the difference, they just know that a movie about a virus sells better than a movie about bacteria because everybody knows that bacteria can be treated with antibiotics. For example, cholera, leprosy, the plague, anthrax and tuberculosis are diseases caused by a bacteria, whereas small pox, AIDS, Ebola, flu and west Nile fever are caused by a virus. Exotic contagions from outer space are often in films referred to as a new virus, whereas usually these will have bacterial properties! Contagion films yet to be made could feature four corner virus, Tick borne encephalitis and Marburg virus."



Forget *I VAMPIRI*, this was the true birth of Italian horror: Barbara Steele immortalised in Mario Bava's *BLACK SUNDAY*

LA NOTTE BAVA

by Ramsey Campbell

This is a disorganized reminiscence of favourite Italian and Spanish horror films. I've been advised that Mexican movies will not be allowed: a pity, since it means I can't quote that haunting line from **NIGHT OF THE BLOODY APES** ("Move over the operating table and prepare the gorilla") or conjure up memories of **BRAINIAC**, the film about the Count whose head swells up and unrolls a long tongue with which he sucks out people's brains (presumably too much for our censor when it was made, and too little for any distributor these days). Still, I hope to recall some strange delights, and at least now I don't have to brood over the dismal quartet of Karloff's Mexican films.

I'm of the generation for whom Mario Bava's **LA MASCHERA DEL DEMONIO** (the first Italian film I ever heard of, under its first English-language title **BLACK SUNDAY**) became a legend. It turned up unannounced as part of the National Film Theatre's Christmas feast for horror fans in 1960, as a last-minute substitute when **FREAKS** proved unavailable. Various correspondents of mine (Pat Kearney, Alan Dodd and, I believe, Michael Parry) wrote to me to commend the film for horror and atmosphere. You may imagine my dismay when I learned that the BBFC had refused it a certificate on the grounds that they would have had to cut it so heavily that it would make no sense. My aversion to film censorship may well have been born at that moment. The censor's solicitude didn't extend to the first Italian horror movie I sought out, Riccardo Freda's **L'ORRIBILE SEGRETO DEL DOTTOR HICHCOCK**, which turned up (appropriately enough, in Barbara Steele's birthplace) in a version which allowed Doctor Hichcock to keep his secret, twelve minutes worth of it, and even suppressed it in the English title (**THE TERROR OF DOCTOR HICHCOCK**). Barbara Steele and Robert Flemyng, and the often startling use of colour and lighting, made up for its absence to an unexpected extent.

Years later I was delighted to get hold of the Vampix videocassette, which proved to be uncensored. Freda's timing of his effects seems to me to be admirable, and the restored scenes of necrophilia are disconcerting as much for their delicacy and agonized romanticism as for what they show.

Bava's **BLACK SABBATH** has no connection with **BLACK SUNDAY** except their director, but I didn't know that when I went twenty miles to see it in the early sixties. The second segment appears to make no sense because (as I understand it) the relationships between the characters has been heterosexualized in the dubbing, but the first segment (*A Drop of Water*) in particular was worth my journey. *Films and Filming* complained that it failed to make clear what was real and what was hallucinated, which sounds like praise to me. I think it's the most frightening short ghost story I've ever seen on a screen, with only Jonathan Miller's version of *Oh, Whistle and I'll Come to You, My Lad* coming close.

A film I haven't seen for most of twenty-five years is Riccardo Freda's **CALTIKI**, and I suppose it's conceivable that viewing it now might dismay me as much as re-reading William Sloane disappointed Harlan Ellison (which is why you won't find Sloane discussed in *Horror: the Hundred Best Books*). Still, many images from it have haunted me - the subterranean lake of the monster in particular - and it wasn't so long after my last look at it that I claimed in *The Arkham Collector* that it was the most Lovecraftian of films. I think that that may well still be true. Certainly the notion of this material directed by Freda, and atmospherically photographed by Bava in monochrome makes me anxious to see the film revived.

It's about time I noted something Spanish. I admit to a certain fondness for some of Paul Naschy's films, especially his wolfman series. The combination of natural locations, proliferating monsters, stock shots of London which in one instance are made to represent Scotland by the addition of

bagpipes on the soundtrack, with a naive conviction in the midst of the most unlikely plotting, I sometimes find irresistible. **WEREWOLF'S SHADOW**, now available uncensored on British DVD, is probably my favourite, not least for the way Naschy barely remarks the presence of the odd walking corpse and for the typical Naschy mixture of an atmosphere reminiscent of the Universal multiple monster movies with some surprising gore and sex. Most of these surprises were originally cut by the British censor from the version I saw double-billed with de Ossorio's **TOMBS OF THE BLIND DEAD**. I still think that the blind dead, at least in this debut film, are among the scarier ghosts in the cinema, almost worthy of *Thurnley Abbey*, that most terrifying of English ghost stories. The uncensored version of **TOMBS** features an unnervingly erotic bondage-in-underwear ritual killing, but makes the blind dead look like bits of rock half-buried in the mud of the international video transfer. Graham Bright and his fellow clowns have a lot to answer for.

I did manage to see all the allegedly offensive films before they were swept away by the panic started, I believe, by a reporter who illustrated his censoriousness in the *Sunday Times* with the cover of the video of Lamberto Bava's **MACABRE**. I'll admit I wouldn't mind seeing that cover disappear, because it manages to give away the image to which the film builds so carefully. This is one of the bleaker psychological horror films, impressively acted and atmospheric, despite its irrelevant final pop-up shock. I'd like to see Bava rediscover the direction he seemed to be following then, rather than continue the out-of-control **DEMONS** series, despite their occasional blazes of imagination.

The real inheritor of Bava Senior's style, or at least a delirious version of it, is Dario Argento. Of his films, the one that always leaves me stunned is **SUSPIRIA**, particularly in the uncensored version (to the extent of a handful of extra shots, as crucial as those cut from **NEAR DARK** on video) available for a while on video from EMI while the noisy hunt for the uncut **BURNING** was on. It's the most operatic of his films that I've seen, though I find the scene in the underwater room in **INFERNO** at least as haunting. But I think I'm fondest of **DEEP RED**, in the admittedly truncated version available on British video which nevertheless contains shots censored in America, not merely for its shocks but also for Argento's way with an untypically coherent narrative, and in particular for the audacious perceptual trick with which the film displays the crucial clue to the audience.

I used not to like Lucio Fulci, not least because his indifference to narrative construction makes Argento look like John Cleese, but I find I return to some of his films for their brooding atmosphere and, certainly, their outrageous violence. Heaven preserve us from his assertion that the drilling scene in **CITY OF THE LIVING DEAD** was meant as social comment! As graphic Gothic extravaganzas, on the other hand, they stay in the mind, and I was pleased to be able to catch up with the uncensored version of **THE BEYOND**, his most dreamlike film. I have to admit, though, that the zombies would scare me at least as much without the gore they spill.

Fulci's fantasies are about as far as I care to go along with the exhibition of violence for its own sake, and I find the imitation in prose fiction of this trend mindless and boring. I haven't much time for the Italian cannibal movies; I might be able to make allowances for their racism (I have to in some of John Ford's best films, after all) but I can't for the almost obligatory scenes of cruelty to animals. (**CANNIBAL HOLOCAUST** is admittedly ingenious, but I was never one of Ruggero Deodato's admirers: **HOUSE ON THE EDGE OF THE PARK** seems to me to disqualify itself from serious consideration by displaying extreme violence only to ignore its after-effects on the victim). I did see **SALÒ; THE 120 DAYS OF SODOM** twice, the second time in Greenwich Village where a complete subtitled print was being shown, from which I emerged with a splitting headache from forcing myself not to look away from the last few minutes. All the same, this is one of the films whose discomforting quality I would take to be proof of seriousness, and I write about the film at greater length in the *Penguin Book of Horror and the Supernatural*.

And so to **BLACK SUNDAY** again, which resurfaced in a ragged version in Britain in the late sixties as **REVENGE OF THE VAMPIRE** and which was finally shown uncensored by the BBC - more power to them - as **THE MASK OF SATAN**. I think it's one of the great justifications of monochrome as a medium for supernatural horror. Hauntingly beautiful, imaginative and startling as a dream, it remains my favourite Italian horror film. Surely even Barbara Steele must be proud of it. Other Bava films are as remarkable in their own way - the complete **WHIP AND THE BODY** in particular is a luscious Freudian fantasy - and it's about time they could be seen here as Bava made them. How long can the English continue to fend off imagination? I live in hope.



Just what a werewolf movie needs... a vampire queen from the Paul Naschy flick **WEREWOLF'S SHADOW**



Last Year at Manenbad

The Sliding of Pleasures: Dialectics of Literature & Film in the Works of Alain Robbe-Grillet

by Marcus Stiglegger and Martin Lindwedel

"Pornography is always the eroticism of others"

- Alain Robbe-Grillet

I.

It is not the crystallisation of the moment that dominates us: **THE SLOW SLIDINGS OF PLEASURE** is the title of one of the films by the French writer Alain Robbe-Grillet, and the permanent sliding, the stream of consciousness and existence, appears in all his works. In the discovering of permanent evolution everything is possible, transformations are unpredictable. The past becomes a vague memory, a dream of existence. The act of remembrance twists and turns the past, changes it in the end. The memories of past life become a farce, the dream of a lost freedom. To live for the past means to live on borrowed ground - out of existential 'Nothingness'. According to the work of Robbe-Grillet it is important to honour the fleeting moment, the passing beauty of its sliding...

It was the ambition of the French *nouveau roman* of the fifties - which was heavily influenced by Robbe-Grillet's artistic and theoretical work - to eliminate the 'humanizing' analogy that had been an important stylistic means of literature's period of realism. Robbe-Grillet's novels concentrate on the detailed description of the surface of events instead. His analysis of the purely visible world is nearly mathematical in its use of 'correct' size and proportion. Every emotional thought is banned, every simulated 'inner space' ignored. The vision of the 'surface' is similar to the 'camera's point of view'; Robbe-Grillet forms pictures and tableaux out of his sentences. His novels are the logical sequels to Jean-Paul Sartre's *La nausée* (1938) with their intense capturing of the isolated surface of the environment. Seemingly mundane phenomena become larger-than-life in the verbal excess of Robbe-Grillet's prose. As in *La jalousie* (1957),

where his description of the same situation goes round in circles, always returning to an almost familiar point, a strange detail that seems every time to change a little. With the developing jealousy of the (no person) narrator, a smashed insect on the wall grows bigger and bigger every time it's mentioned. The cyclical excess of description pushes the intensity of the officially absent emotions. Most of Robbe-Grillet's novels take place in only a couple of hours, visited again and again. The author is almost 'teaching' his audience: look again, look closer, it is not as it seems!

Robbe-Grillet defines the 'no person' narrator, the supposedly empty X of the story, as his 'absent ego'. He represents the perspective of a neutral observer of events, the eyewitness, an archetype of the author's work, his 'alter ego': the voyeur (one of his novels even has this title). In his work from *La maison de rendez-vous* (1965) on, Robbe-Grillet's novels take a more and more obsessive view of explicit sexual elements, mostly sadomasochistic psychodramas. These elements were often the 'empty spaces', the ellipses of his earlier novels, but with *La Maison*, which is an ironic variation on key elements of Pauline Réage's emblematic erotic novel *L'Histoire d'O*, these elements became the trademark of his writings and the films he made since 1961. This turn to explicit sexuality is influenced by his film-experiences, a new lust in creating fantasies... Other elements which define his *oeuvre* are: exotic settings, especially Asia, brothels, whips, chains, cages, beautiful yet mysterious women, enigmatic acts of brutal murder, rape, escape, secret agents, and executives of totalitarian regimes. Established mysteries are never solved, the conventional ending is neglected.

"Our past is all too fragile. When you turn around to face it, it will fall to pieces immediately..." Even in his autobiographical trilogy, Robbe-Grillet never trusts his own memories. The past becomes a dream of existence. Therefore the author

confronts the historical events from a 'neutral', objective point of view: he tells his biography like one of his fictional works, peppered with erotic fantasies and episodes from his novels. In effect, this technique is only the simulation of a narrative distance. Actually Robbe-Grillet's late trilogy is his most subjective work to date. His poetic and magical realism evokes the films of Jean Cocteau, a similar 'cold' and intellectual artist at first sight. On the other hand his fantasies show allusions to the films of Jess Franco, who cites Robbe-Grillet in *NECRONOMICON*, and Jean Rollin. Probably Robbe-Grillet is the missing link between poetic vision, radical aesthetics, and excessive sexual rituals, even blood sacrifices.

II.

The complex montage of Alain Resnais's early documentaries and essay-films (such as **NIGHT AND FOG**) had always resembled the fragmented collages in Robbe-Grillet's texts. It came as no surprise that Resnais - after his successful collaboration with another *nouveau-roman* author, Marguerite Duras - showed an interest in working with Robbe-Grillet. Therefore Resnais directed his second feature film after the 'cinéroman' **LAST YEAR AT MARIENBAD** (1961) by Robbe-Grillet. With well composed images, luxurious decorations and ambitious camerawork (by Sascha Vierny) Resnais opens the first cinematic viewing of Robbe-Grillet's visions. The film is a very abstract reflection, about memory and imagination, desire and deception and - last but not least - about cinema itself. On the other hand, it's a pure visual trip into the non-logical universe of Robbe-Grillet.

Space

The opening sequence of **LAST YEAR AT MARIENBAD** creates a vision of a permanent sliding of time and space. The camera-eye loiters through endless corridors, galleries and passages of an ancient and baroque 'grand hotel'. However, the sequence never presents an overview of the hotel-space. There's no outdoor view to give an idea of the structure and real dimensions of this strange labyrinth of inner space. But what is shown to the spectator's view is not really an inner space, the private rooms of the possible guests and inhabitants of the hotel: the progressive sliding of the camera-eye only roams through the 'non-room' of the hotel. (Corridors, galleries, passages). This

space forms an outside in the inner space of the hotel. Later on the eye of the spectator will penetrate into a single private room: a secret chamber of real emotional inner space. Constantly, slowly, the view moves on through 'interminable hallways' and 'silent halls', the passages and public domains between the private inner spaces. It passes the walls without staying on particular details, going along geometric room-parts, rectangular rows of square window frames, quadratic panelling. The focus shows us ornamental decorations, glittering chandeliers, and windows that don't give any view outwards but reflect the images of the hotel-space like mirrors on the wall. This construction of space, this image of space created by the dreamlike meditative exposition is typical for Robbe-Grillet: on the one hand it is architecturally clear and consists of a geometrical order, on the other hand it is a fragmentary, disintegrated and subversive labyrinth without order. This desperate, paradoxical space never establishes a coherent structure of functional rooms, of possible stations of a narrative system. Therefore, the narrative structure of **LAST YEAR AT MARIENBAD** is as subversive as the architectural structure of the hotel. The hotel-space forms a metaphorical image of the non-narrative structure of Robbe-Grillet's novels.

The space of **MARIENBAD** seems to be a 'formless totality', an 'any-space-whatever', as Gilles Deleuze names it in his second cinema book *The Time Image*. The 'any-space-whatever' by Deleuze is no longer a trigger or a carrier of a 'sensory-motor scheme'. This space is not even a locality that produces action or a 'scene of action' that forces a character to do something. Nothing happens. Nobody really acts. The narrative movement is out of order. This space-construction refuses any image-of-action and forms a "pure optical and acoustical situation" (Deleuze). The people of the 'any-space-whatever' happen to have the condition of walkers, strollers, especially that modus of movement, which is given to the exposition of the film. In the established space of the 'grand hotel' no (narrative) event takes place, no goal directed movement arises. Rather, the 'any-space-whatever' aims to represent something different: the time itself.

In Deleuze's interpretation the occurrence of 'any-space-whatever' in the cinema of Italian Neo-Realism constitutes a fundamental metamorphosis of the cinematic image. He describes this metamorphosis as the transition of the 'movement image' into the 'time image'. The aim of the movement image was (and still is in modern Hollywood

action-cinema) to create a totality of the characters, the action, the motivation and the space: all action is linked by a causal and narrative chain into a complex image of goal-directed movement. In Neo-Realism, the space gets a different character: the causal-logical chain is broken and time escapes from its bond to narrative-causal structure. The best examples for this change of views are the early films of Michelangelo Antonioni. The action, or rather the motivated acts of a person, which are connected with space, lead to a running on the spot or even to a circle-structure as in **IL GRIDO** (1951). However, instead of creating an image of a narrative movement through time, the time-image allows a view on time itself.

In this way the hotel of **MARIENBAD** resembles the industrialist-villa in **LA NOTTE** (1960), with its clear architecture, the intricate interior, the mirrors and reflecting window glasses and the chequer on the floor in the hall, where Jeanne Moreau and Marcello Mastroianni roam around aimless and bored, only representing an image of the passing time. But whereas Antonioni presents a modern-urban architecture in **LA NOTTE**, the hotel in **MARIENBAD** carries the signs of an ancient epoch. It forms a cultural memory-space: instead of the contemporary time image of **LA NOTTE** (typical for Neo-Realism), **MARIENBAD** represents signs of the past: classical columns, antique statues, the 'jardin à la française', baroque ornamentation, liveried servants. But this space and its signs do not represent any concrete past (nor any concrete location: 'Marienbad' is just an accidental name). It assembles all these elements in a present image of a paralysed time. An actor on the stage of the hotel speaks significantly of a 'past of marble'. This time-image of the hotel-space is characterized by the following aspects which are given by Robbe-Grillet's *cinéroman*: *marbres, murs, mort, silence, solitude, ordonnance, uni, clos, vide, lieu de repos, habitude, Éternelle attente* (marble, walls, death, silence, loneliness, order, uniform, closed, empty, place of calmness, habit, eternal waiting.)

The modus of time represented by these terms is without any depth. Therefore the people in the hotel-space have an existence of marble, too. They appear as a "clientele anonymous, polished, rich" (Robbe-Grillet). The well dressed guests and servants, with their frozen mimicry and stylish surfaces, are lost in empty conversation and while away the time (word-to-word) with little plays and rituals, which follow strict rules. In this image of time without

depth no narrative movement is able to be established. There is no beginning and no end and therefore no goal-directed movement in between.

As in the short novels *Instantanées* the people freeze suddenly in the middle of a movement as if they are caught by a photographer's shot. Robbe-Grillet himself designates this technique as 'instantanéité': "The time is disconnected from its temporality. It doesn't flow any more. It doesn't complete anything. The instant negates the continuity." Actually, the space-and-time-modus of the 'grand hotel', including its human inventory, is nothing but an endless still frame.

The voice

The basis situation of the 'endless wait' and the 'silence' is now penetrated by the male protagonist X (Giorgio Albertazzi). X, an unknown variable in the microcosm of the hotel. At first, X only exists as a voice which accompanies the exposition, the sliding through the hotel-space. But the voice oscillates between nearness and distance to the position of the camera-eye. The voice is loitering like the camera (but is not identical with its point of view) and recites a text over and over again that describes the ornamentation, the walls, the corridors, ... like a literary description of the interior. But soon it emerges that this voice is not integrated in the time-image of the 'grand hotel'. The voice (and with it the protagonist X) have a concrete aim: the young woman, A (Delphine Seyrig) and the conversation with her. A stands out among the mass of the other guests only because of X's interest in her. X approaches A with an effortless conversation. But soon it transpires that what he really offers her is a personal past, a future and even a passion. He offers A the escape from the non-temporal space of the hotel and from her endless waiting existence. He offers a 'life', or more precisely: movement, change, development. And this offer is significantly given through a narrative movement: X starts to tell A a story, a story about their past and about their future. He tells her about a 'last year at Marienbad', when A loved him and promised to leave her companion M (Sacha Pitoeff - 'M' could stand for 'mari', the French word for husband) and to go away with X one year later. That means, in his logic, 'today'.

Through this narration X establishes a certain depth in the non-temporal time of marble: he forms a chronological causal structure with a beginning (last year, past/memory, the promise), a present (today, reunion with A) and a future

(fulfilment of the promise, escape from the hotel). *"The hero introduces by force a past into this closed and empty world."* (Robbe-Grillet) At first, this past only exists in his voice, in the past tense of the speech. Besides, the past is caused by X's definition of his narration as memory. Only because of this definition (or rather assertion) a depth of time can be created: only the promise, given by A in the past, is able to open the present for a possible future. If it will be kept, then the escape from the endless still frame of the 'grand hotel' seems to be possible.

But A just doesn't seem to remember! She opposes X and his narration. Over and over again he repeats his demand: 'Remember!' But A answers with the imperative of the silent hotel space: 'Be quiet!' This imperative is her resistance to the voice, the narration and the past. X's offer, the possibility of movement and time, seems to be a menace to her, because it means also passion, a passionate demand for sexuality.

"The whole film is the story of a seduction" (Robbe-Grillet). X is a seducer and A's resistance is no reason to abandon his aim. His strategy is to bring A into movement. He tries to disrupt her stiffness (A waiting in the hall; staring immobile in the gallery; motionless in the salon, reading). At the same time he wants to direct her movements. Their first real movement is the waltz: a movement which is still a ritualised movement following the conventions of the hotel space, but which is already controlled by X. The waltz is a symbolic understatement of what is deeply desired by X: the final act, the sexual act. To reach this aim he has to continue developing narrative and physical movement. X offers his service as a 'good guide' through the secret and branched corridors of the hotel: *"There is, here, a lot of things for you to see."* And there will indeed be a lot of things for A to see! X continues talking insistently to A. He embroiders his narration with more and more details. And more and more often the scenes of his story transform into images of the film. The 'Remember!' becomes a 'Watch!': by a narrative work of memory X forces his images upon A. A and also the spectator of the film become watchers of his private visions. The border between present and past becomes blurred: memories and perception transform into only one vision: the cinematic image.

However, there aren't any real flashbacks in this movie. On the visual level, there are no codes that identify single sequences as flashbacks or memories. The images are producing a profound uncertainty: the spectator tries to distinguish the time levels (e.g. through A's changing

wardrobe) but in the end it's impossible. There are no signs in the images that would form any idea of 'memory' or 'past'. It's only the voice that pretends the modus of memory for several sequences. And vice versa: without the voice every scene of **MARIENBAD** could be a potential flashback or a present image, the whole film could be only memory or imagination.

Robbe-Grillet himself heavily supported this interpretation of the film. In the introduction to his cinéroman he explains that all images of the film could be classified as imaginations. He argues that the whole film is an 'inner film', a dream or a memory that is given in present images: because *"an imagination is always in the present."* And the cinematic image is predestined to represent such an 'imagination', because the only grammatical time of the film is present tense. But if the whole film is a single imagination, a dream, we have to look out for the dreamer or rather the productive power behind the images. It's probably X: he forces A to see his visions, he arranges and directs her movement. He is in a sense (or reflects the role of) a director of the images of the film. With his forceful voice he lets her see his visions, his imaginations (which are the film). A seems to be in a trance, she hallucinates, guided by the master's voice (Bruce Morissette found a lot of signs of hypnotic practise in the film). But isn't the role of the spectator the same as the role of this hypnotized woman? Once again the exposition: it's X's voice that accompanies the images which show what he tells. Are we just seeing what he is telling us? Does the whole film have the status of a hypnotic, hallucinatory trip into his imagination? However, there is a productive power in the film itself which holds an author function: X, or rather: X's voice.

The Image

Very often X's voice accompanies the images of the film as a voice off. The voice off is a cinematic stylistic element that crosses the border to (narrative) literature. The function of the voice off is comparable to the function of a narrator: both form the 'reality' of a fictitious world with their words. For Robbe-Grillet the literary tradition of narration is also a tradition of coherence and logical continuity. This tradition is represented by the narrator model of 19th century Realism. The omniscient narrator (of Honoré de Balzac for example) pretends that he only represents a given reality. But that, in Robbe-Grillet's opinion, is nothing but a lie. The

narrator is a powerful force that hovers like a god above his universe: he creates it with his words. His corruption is that he tries to disguise his own imaginary universe as a copy of a natural status quo. But continuity and logical-psychological structures are not given by nature; they are constructs of the human spirit.

To deconstruct the ancient narrator Robbe-Grillet creates a new model: the 'hero-narrator'. The hero-narrator is a person who is integrated in the narrated world but never speaks in the first person! He reflects the corruption of the omniscient narrator by using the traditional narrative codes to hide his own invention behind these conventions. He always has a personal (and most often passionate) intention that can only be suspected by the reader. Mathias, the protagonist of Robbe-Grillet's *Le Voyeur* (1954) is such a 'hero-narrator'. The whole novel is written in the impersonal third person and seems to describe objectively three days in the life of a commercial traveller who visits a little island. Nothing important happens but a lot of strange ruptures and omissions occur in the text. The reader gets sceptical: isn't it Mathias himself who tells the whole story and who arranges the scenes and the events to hide a really important incident: perhaps he raped and killed a little girl called Violette. Robbe-Grillet's message is: behind the cold and neutral surface (even of the text), there is passion, obsession and often violence.

X's obsession is the seduction of A (in Robbe-Grillet's novel there's even an explicit rape). X plays - like Mathias in *Le Voyeur* - the role of a 'hero-narrator': "*it's a reality that is created by the hero, by his own vision, by his own speech*" (Robbe-Grillet). 'Reality', that is what the cinematic image shows. We can't know which images are manipulated by X. We can't distinguish images that show 'neutral' reality from such images that present subjective reality (de-)formed by obsession. The borderline between represented reality and created vision becomes blurred. Reality becomes nothing but a phenomenological and personal vision. X does production work. But by camouflaging his inventions as memory, they appear as facts. The remembered past (the promise of A) is perhaps only an imagination. But by treating the imagination as remembered fact, X is able to manipulate and to direct A towards his final desire: her seduction. He forms an idealized image of the woman he wants.

A seems to abandon her resistance: '*All right, tell me then how your story is going on.*' Although, she seems to realize his tactics: '*You invent...'*, '*You fantasize...'*. And X continues. His

final destination seems to be the construction of a 'secret chamber', the only private room in the public space of the hotel. This chamber (probably A's room) shall be the location of the sexual seduction. For X it's only memory, but for A and the spectator it becomes a present reality: little by little his voice forms the room and puts A into it. He directs her movement and her gestures. In the centre there's a big bed. The scene follows his instructions, but suddenly the voice seems to lose control: '*Then you returned to the bed... you returned to the bed, you sat down on the bed. .*' But A resists. She doesn't move into the suggested direction. Even X's insistence on his version ('*And you returned to the bed... Please listen to me... remember!*') can't avoid A's escape. The door is open ('*The door is closed now!*'), A goes out... ('*Where are you? Where are you going? Why do you want to escape?*'). From this point on, X loses his control of the woman and even of his imagination. The voice loses the control of the images. The causal narrative structure that leads to the final act is destroyed. The clear structure of X's narration splits into three different and alternative endings: M shoots A; X falls from a wall; A and X leave the hotel. X is no longer able to arrange his inventions in a logical order. The vision or rather the cinematic image itself is disturbed: the entire furniture of A's room changes place from sequence to sequence, the axis jumps, the space cracks. X's repressive memory project fails: '*I can't remember any more... Even I can't remember anymore.*'

At the beginning of the film A appears as a 'belle captive' of the hotel space who has to be freed by X. But this is only X's interpretation of the scene! He only wants to get her into movement to lead her to a fatal finality: his desired ideal image in which she becomes his prisoner. Resnais's film gives an authentic experience of Robbe-Grillet's vision of world but without the explicit sexual content of the following films directed by Robbe-Grillet himself. This film is very close to his early works and is still of ongoing interest because of its reflection and criticism of traditional narration. And surely, this film is an aesthetic trip! Rejected by the French film industry, the film nevertheless won the Golden Lion at the 1961 Venice film festival.

III

One year later Robbe-Grillet made his directorial debut with a screenplay he originally wrote for Resnais: *L'IMMORTELLE* (1961). This dreamlike fable of the desperate search of the man N for a mysterious woman shows

Robbe-Grillet's very own vision of cinema, as he had been a bit disappointed by the Resnais adaption of **MARIENBAD**, especially because Resnais took out the explicit rape-scene the author thought of as being essential. So **L'IMMORTELLE** varies the enigmatic games of **MARIENBAD** in an Istanbul setting, replacing the elegant camera-movement by alienating static, frozen black-and-white-shots, often in wide-angle. Robbe-Grillet realised his idea of an intellectual montage by only playing with recognisable narrative elements, which are often presented as 'clichés'. Seen as a whole this film seems to embody the mystery of the city of Istanbul for a Western-European visitor via the desired woman who eventually dies in a car accident in the beginning. As the film obeys the law of the circle, N has to die the same way, too.

In some of Robbe-Grillet's subsequent films his friend Jean-Louis Trintignant appears as a sinister stranger. His star-appeal brought the difficult arthouse works to international attention. **TRANS-EUROPE EXPRESS** (1966) is much more ironic than its predecessor and shows most of the actors in different roles - yet another game; even Robbe-Grillet and his wife appear in the roles of a film director and his assistant. For the first time he uses the genre-pattern of the crime-film/novel, not unlike his mystery-novel *La maison de rendez-vous*, and some of the **TRANS-EUROPE EXPRESS** elements will appear in his late novel *Projet pour une révolution à New York*. According to its setting, the train - an allegorical place of the rite-de-passage - this film can be seen as a creative work in progress: a director, his writer and the producer board a train and begin to invent a gangster-scenario which is inspired by the presence of a famous actor (Trintignant); scored by the music of *La Traviata* a cryptic gangster-plot unfolds and leads to another string of events: Trintignant plays the sadomasochistic criminal Elias (Alias?), who tries to smuggle some dope to Antwerp. In the end the two levels of narration meet again. **TRANS-EUROPE EXPRESS** was the director's first commercial success, probably due to a rough rape scene including bondage-play, a sequence that is finally marked as fictitious. Unlike **L'IMMORTELLE** this film includes some psychological acting - not only the usual poses of the no-person narrator.

L'HOMME QUI MENT (1968), again presenting Jean-Louis Trintignant, is Robbe-Grillet's most perfect filmic adaption of his literary theories. Followed by a very dynamic handheld camera the film shows the events around the escape of the 'liar' Boris Varissa - who is

followed by Wehrmacht stormtroopers. He is searching for his former comrade Jean Robin (also a common name in Robbe-Grillet's prose). Again and again Varissa tells the story which led to his escape, but each time the facts differ. The individual creates himself anew all the time, desperately trying to give himself a 'history' - a very pessimistic view on history in general, this... The multiple personality of Varissa is the prototype of Robbe-Grillet's narrator/hero. An objective world is non-existent, even when the narrator is executed half way through the film. Filmed in impressive chiaroscuro black-and-white, even the soundtrack lies in this film: when Varissa crosses a deserted village, his off-voice reflects on the crowded market-place.

Three years on, the writer/director made his first colour film, **L'EDEN ET APRÈS**, which also came out in even more fragmented and confusing form as the TV movie **N APRIS LES DÈS**. The purely audiovisual - non-dramaturgical - narration circles around a group of young students who organise strange rites of passage, initiations that appear like pagan sacrifices and ritual rapes. The narrator this time is female: Violette (Cathérine Jourdan) travels through dark industrial areas and deserts of the far east only to encounter a stranger (Pierre Zimmer), who changes his identity permanently. Even the exposition of the film confronts the viewer with Robbe-Grillet's keywords: 'game, blood, rape, Eden, sex, labyrinth and subjective.' These words mark the playground of the director's sadomasochistic and at the same time highly theoretical filmic experiments. Again literature and film melt in his hands. Jean Améry criticised this film for hypocrisy, for intellectualised glorification of sexual violence - the luxury of the voyeur seems to make him untouchable for the 'truth of the torture'.

Undeterred, Robbe-Grillet found the essence of his next work in Jules Michelet's inquisition-document *La sorcière* ('The sorceress'), which he transformed into the psychological phantasmagoria of **GLISSEMENTS PROGRESSIFS DU PLAISIR** (1974). This seems to be his favourite film so far. Like **L'HOMME QUI MENT** it revolves around the desperate reconstruction of the past: a young girl (Anicée Alvina) supposedly killed her elder girl-friend and is interrogated by a police-detective (Trintignant again), a cardinal and a judge. The film intercuts the interrogation/seduction sequences with violent visions of torture and inquisition. The girl reflects the situation of the suppressed female of Michelet's prose. However, the 'victim' manages to play with her 'inquisitors' who in the end go crazy. By permanent

variation of the 'truth' she destroys every reliable system. This lone adolescent - most of the time naked in her cell - becomes Robbe-Grillet's incarnated hope for the destruction of the 'rational dictum'. Alvina also appears in his tasteful and amusing gangster-comedy **LE JEU AVEC LE FEU** (1975), an ironic kidnapping-drama which Robbe-Grillet produced with his own money and realized in the rooms of the Paris Opera House. His variation of soft porno stereotypes (including the appearance of Sylvia Kristel, then famous as Emmanuelle) is funny but in no way as sharp as his other fantasies.

Alain Robbe-Grillet directed one more film - **LA BELLE CAPTIVE** (1983), a dreamlike compendium of his usual motives, filmed by Henri Alekan - and worked as a writer and consultant on **UN BRUIT QUI REND FOU** (1994), which was completed by his pupil Dimitri de Clercq, as well as Raoul Servais's semi-animation film **TAXANDRIA** (1988). While **UN BRUIT** varies the story of the 'flying Dutchman' by using elements of *La maison de rendez-vous*, **LA BELLE CAPTIVE** is his last genuine effort, a cross-over of vampire and detective story, appearing like an over-aestheticised farewell from the world of his hermetic cinematic vision.

IV.

Alain Robbe-Grillet can be seen as one of the few 'multimedia' artists who can create a dialectic relationship between literature and film. In a way similar to the self-referentiality of postmodern culture, he creates an open universe of quotes, references, alliterations, allusions and fakes, transgressing the borders of the medium, integrating related art-forms and exchanging specific techniques in the media-exchange. Film freezes to become a tableau, photographs come to life, and characters doubt their own identity. He writes books supplying photographs (by David Hamilton), based on paintings (by René Magritte), and then he makes a film out of this experience (**LA BELLE CAPTIVE**). Robbe-Grillet's literature is film-like in the detailed description of surfaces, while his filmmaking is like literature in its intellectual playfulness and theoretical fragmentation. As Jean Améry writes, "*filmmaking was the logical conclusion of Robbe-Grillet's 'optical' descriptions*", because written words have a border, a virtual frontier, that the 'motion pictures' can probably transgress. The literature-inspired imagination of the reader is dependent on his personal experiences, and at best creates an individual,

always changing 'film' in the reader's mind (a fact that led Roland Barthes to the conclusion that the author 'dies' with the reading of his text). And even here most of the senses are excluded: smell, taste, touch... Lust and pain involuntarily become playthings of the mind. Film actually transgresses the borders of literature by the unchangeable perspective of narration: sound and picture manifest via soundtrack and focus, establishing narrow borders which can only be transgressed by experienced viewers. Therefore film is the final point of literature by creating concrete visions out of the abstract phrases and symbolisms of the words. The narrative dramaturgy is - in Robbe-Grillet's perspective - as concrete as it is opened up to interpretation. Even his film-novels (cinéromans) pointed in this direction. The focus of his novels had a cinematic edge (see *La Maison de rendez-vous*) just as his films never lost touch with the importance of words (as in the word-games of **L'EDEN ET APRÈS**). In addition his films and his novels transform the definition of the 'pure' and the 'impure' film given by André Bazin: a 'pure' film only relies on the use of genuine filmic means; it only presents sound and picture in montage and does not deliver any narrative dramaturgy; most narrative feature films are in fact 'impure' films, they make extensive use of narrative structures drawn from literature. Robbe-Grillet's literature in contrast is so cinematic that his novels can hardly be labelled 'classical narration'. In return his film-*oeuvre* - as the cinematic adaption of the 'nouveau roman' - results in a go-between of 'pure' and 'impure' cinema. It is at the same time ironically narrative as it is experimental and fragmentary.

If there is a dialectic between film and literature, Robbe-Grillet oscillates on the waves linking these media. The visualisation of his verbal artefacts again points out the radical subjectivity of the 'nouveau roman': the secret personal point of view is in fact already established between the lines. The moment of delirium is all too evident in moments when the richness of the description in his novels becomes excessive, as mentioned above: in *La Jalousie* the feelings of the narrator are never mentioned directly but the intensity of the constant description of the same events signifies his growing jealousy... But even more than his writings, the films of Alain Robbe-Grillet are the simultaneous incarnation of a deeply eroticised and an intellectualised '*vision du monde*'. Georges Bataille's idea of 'transgression' became Robbe-Grillet's very own model to transcend an enlightened humanity.

BOOKS BY ALAIN ROBBE-GRILLET:

- 1951 *Une régicide*
 1953 *Les gommies*
 1955 *Le voyageur*
 1959 *Dans le labyrinthe*
 1957 *La jalousie*
 1961 *L'année dernière à Marienbad*
 1962 *Instantanés*
 1963 *Pour un Nouveau Roman*
 1963 *L'immortelle*
 1965 *La maison de rendez-vous*
 1971 *Rêves de jeunes filles*
 1970 *Projet pour un révolution à New York*
 1973 *Les demoiselles*
 1974 *Glissements progressifs du plaisir*
 1976 *La belle captive*
 1976 *Topologie d'une cité fantôme*
 1977 *Temple aux miroirs*
 1982 *Djinn*
 1984 *Le miroir qui révient*
 1987 *Angélique ou le enchantement*
 1994 *Les derniers jours de Corinthe*

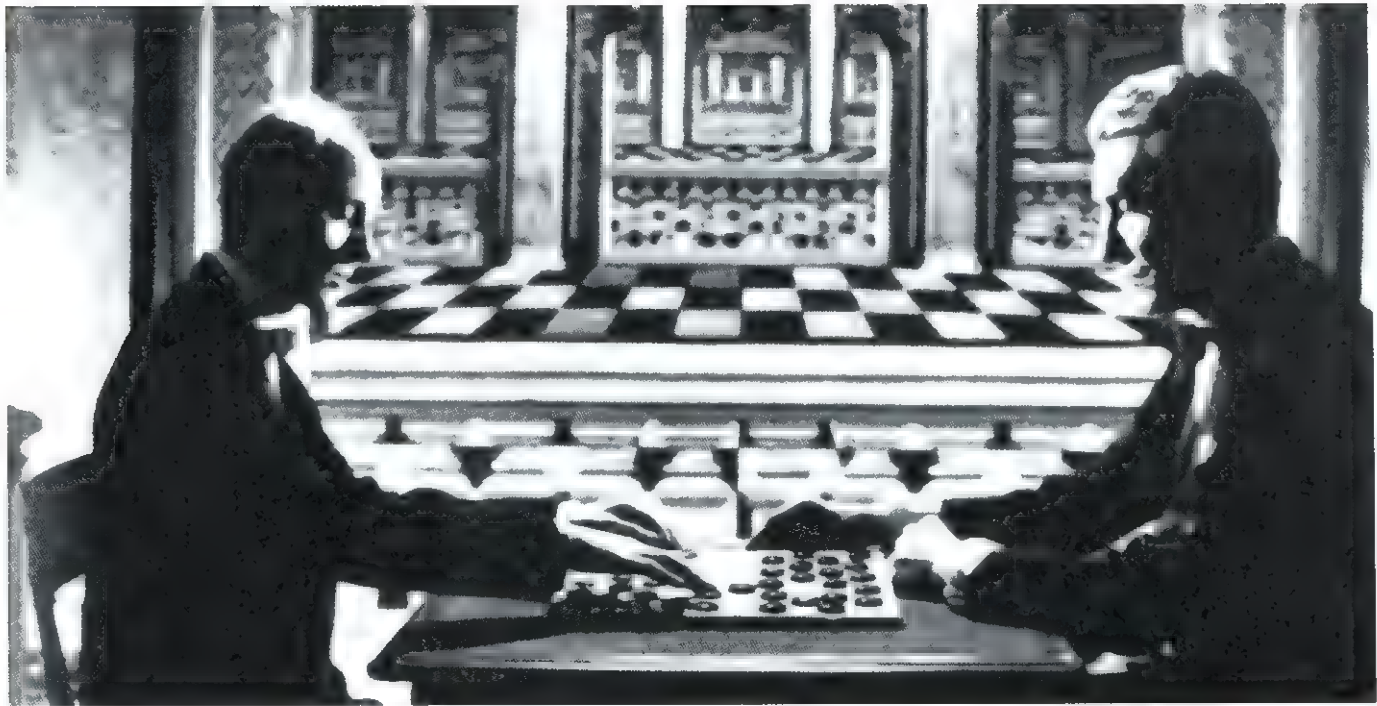
FILMS BY ALAIN ROBBE-GRILLET:

Robbe-Grillet's credits: LS: Literary source, SC: Screenplay, D: Director, A: Actor

- 1961 **L'ANNÉE DERNIÈRE À MARIENBAD** (Last Year at Marienbad, SC) D: Alain Resnais
 1962 **IN THE LABYRINTH** (LS) D: Robert Liikala (short film)
 1963 **L'IMMORTELLE** (The Immortal, SC/D)
 1966 **TRANS-EUROP-EXPRESS** (Trans-Europe-Express, SC/D/A)
 1968 **LE HOMME QUI MENT** (The Man Who Lies, SC/D)
 1968 **JE T'AIME JE T'AIME** (I Love You, I Love You, A) D: Alain Resnais
 1969 **LES GOMMES** (LS) D: René Micha (TV-movie)
 1971 **L'ÉDEN ET APRÈS** (Eden and After, SC/D)
 1971 **N'APRIS LES DÈS** (N Took the Dice, SC/D)
 1972 **LA JALOUSIE** (LS) D: Klaus Kieschner (TV-movie)
 1974 **GLISSEMENTS PROGRESSIFS DU PLAISIR** (Slow Slidings of Pleasure, SC/D)
 1975 **LE JEU AVEC LE FEU** (Play With the Fire, SC/D)
 1977 **PIÈGE À FOURROURE** (Project, cancelled)
 1983 **LA BELLE CAPTIVE** (SC/D)
 1988 **TAXANDRIA** (SC) D: Raoul Servais
 1994 **UN BRUIT QUI REND FOU** (The Blue Villa, SC/CoD)
 D: Dimitri de Clercq

Bibliography:

- Roy Armes: Alain Robbe-Grillet, in: *French Cinema Since 1946*, London 1966/1970
 same: The Opening of L'Immortelle, in: *Film Reader No 5*, Illinois 1979, S.154ff.
 same: *The Films of Alain Robbe-Grillet*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins B.V. 1981
 Royal S. Brown: Alain Robbe-Grillet Film Retrospective: Monday, April 17 -Sunday, April 30, 1989, New York 1989
 Gilles Deleuze: *Cinema*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam, University of Minnesota Press Minneapolis, 1986
 Anthony N. Fragola, Roch C. Smith: *The Erotic Dream Machine: Interviews with Alain Robbe-Grillet on His Films*, Carbondale, Edwardsville Southern Illinois University Press 1992
 Martin Lindwedel: Zeit und Erinnerung in L'année dernière à Marienbad, in: Heike Bröhm (ed.): *Erinnern Gedächtnis Vergessen*, Bonn Romanistischer Verlag 2000, p. 317ff.
 Leo Phelix / Rolf Thissen: *Pioniere und Prominente des modernen Sexfilms*, München. Goldmann 1983
 Marcus Stiglegger: Im Labyrinth der Begierde: Das filmische Werk von Alain Robbe-Grillet, in: *Splanning Image*, No. 39, September 1999, p. 19ff.
 Jean Streff: *Le Masochisme au cinéma*, Editions Henri Veyrier 1979 / 1990
 Cathal Tohill / Pete Tombs: *Immoral Tales*, New York: St. Martin's Griffin 1995
 Pete Tombs: Oddball Kinkiness & Intellectual Conceits: The Films of Alain Robbe-Grillet, in: *Flesh & Blood Nine*, Surrey: FAB Press 1997, p. 67-71, re-printed in: *Flesh & Blood Compendium*, Surrey: FAB Press 2003, p.352-357
 John Ward: Alain Robbe-Grillet: The Novelist As Director, in: *Sight and Sound*, Spring 1968
 William F. van Wert: *The Film Career of Alain Robbe-Grillet*, New York: Redgrave Publishing 1977



▲ ▼ Last Year at Manenbad





Out of the Darkness with Pupi Avati

by Alan Jones

In the world of Italian Fantasy and Horror there is one director who can't be categorised in simple terms. His name is Giuseppe Avati, Pupi for short, and the reason for this is he has only made a few genre films since announcing his expert credentials with **BALSAMUS L'UOMO DI SATANA** in 1968. Most Horror fans know Avati's name because of his brilliant Gothic chiller **THE HOUSE WITH LAUGHING WINDOWS** (1976) and, to a lesser extent, the zombie saga **ZEDER, VOICES FROM THE BEYOND** (1983) and his remarkably atmospheric **THE ARCAN E ENCHANTER** (1996). But in Italy, Avati is best known for such critically acclaimed and prize-winning movies as **BIX** (1991), a bio-pic of the legendary jazz cornet player Bix Beiderbecke, **THE STORY OF BOYS AND GIRLS** (1989), a wonderful look at family life in the North Italian district of Emilia-Romagna (Avati's birth place in 1938, where he sets most of his movies), and **BORDELLA** (1976), a cutting edge sex fable that found itself caught up in a **LAST TANGO IN PARIS**-type controversy.

An unsung hero outside Italy, Avati has directed every kind of film from **NOI TRE** (1984), about the school life of young Mozart, and the sentimental **CHRISTMAS PRESENT** (1986) to the Cannes Best Director nominated **MAGNIFICAT** (1993) and the Golden Globe nominated **IL TESTIMONE DELLO SPOSI** (1998). Horror Fantasy is not the only interest Avati has and that's why he has effortlessly applied himself to numerous other projects outside the genre and forged such a successfully diverse and interesting career. Avati said, *"All of my films have a strong point of view and an essential moral core. I look at every story seriously and stamp it with my own personality because I'm scared by the imagination of others. There is always a clear path to the truth in all of my work, whether it be Horror, comedy or romance. That's why audiences like my movies as they are entertaining while always being truthful and saying something important. Yet I always hope*

that they contain something I don't know, a hidden depth beyond what I've given them. I like them running away from my psyche and being interpreted by others in different ways. Sometimes I read things about my movies that I find unbelievable, but if the writer can prove his theories are valid, great. Isn't that what true art is all about?"

Avati is only interested in filming specific stories he can really get personally involved in. His latest is no exception: **I CAVALIERI CHE FECERO L'IMPRESSA** aka **KNIGHTS OF THE QUEST** is the story of five knights in 1271 who band together to search for the Shroud of Turin, the holy relic that supposedly covered the body of Christ after his crucifixion. Set in a dark world where cruelty, brutality and superstition reigns, Avati's self-penned Gothic adventure deals with faith, black magic, secret pacts and exorcism as five mismatched innocents sail to Greece to claim the religious artefact for King Louis IX of France. The \$18 million medieval epic (Avati's most expensive to date) stars Edward Furlong as Simon of Clarendon, a virtuous innocent destined to become a member of the living dead, Thomas Kretschmann as Vanni delle Rondini, hunky Italian pin-up Raoul Bova as blacksmith Giacomo di Altogiovanni who sells his soul to the Devil in order to craft the most perfect sword for Rondini, Marco Leonardi as Ranieri di Panico, and French newcomer Stanislas Merhar as Jean de Cent Acres. Other cast members include **AMADEUS** Oscar-winner F. Murray Abraham as Delfinello da Coverzano, a sailor monk who helps the knights on their voyage of self discovery, Sixties Eurovision pop star Gigliola Cinquetti as a nun and Avati's favourite character actor Carlo Delle Piane, who turns up again as the narrator Giovanni da Cantalupo.

I spoke with Avati about his past career and **KNIGHTS OF THE QUEST** on location in south-east Italy at Barletta Castle, where he filmed the scenes of the knights meeting Delfinello and their introduction to his twilight world of

caring for disease-ridden torture victims whose flesh has melted into their chain mail. Buffs may like to note that Avati used exactly the same underground locations as director Pier Paolo Pasolini did for his 1964 masterpiece **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MATTHEW**. In fact, Avati script-doctored **SALÒ, OR THE 120 DAYS OF SODOM** for Pasolini but remained uncredited on the final print.

Avati is one of the fortunate few who has been able to combine his hobbies with his profession. As a boy in his native Bologna, Avati's twin passions were jazz and the study of the Middle Ages and he has consistently mined his knowledge of both to great effect in his astounding body of work. He was an ordinary factory worker who started playing jazz professionally until he went to the cinema to see the film that would change his life. It was Federico Fellini's **8 1/2** (Fellini was another Emilia-Romagna native) and that surreal autobiography fired up Avati's desire to work in the film industry. His first film, **BALSAMUS, MAN OF SATAN** (1968), was an anachronistic examination of the folk customs and superstitions of the Emilia-Romagna people. Avati said, *"Balsamus was basically about a Christ Child whose purity is contaminated by a female presence that causes him to lose his omnipotence. I like shooting in Emilia-Romagna because it has disturbing magical elements far removed from the tranquil atmosphere most visitors think the region solely has. It's peculiar discussing my early work, you know. As you get older, your priorities change, and I was very optimistic when I embarked on my directing career. My early films were protest movies in a way. Now they've become darker and a lot more pessimistic. If I see a movie I made twenty years ago, I recognise - with embarrassment - my world view at the time. It's like looking at old photos of yourself and scarcely being able to believe what you were wearing!"*

His next film was **THOMAS E GLI INDEMONIATI / THOMAS THE POSSESSED** (1970) starring Mariangela Melato and Edmund Purdom - it was virtually unseen then and is impossible to view now. Avati does have a copy on video but he refuses to let anyone see it. He remarked, *"I don't like the film because it's far too theatrical. Basically it was about a group of actors holding a séance during which a young child materialises. Adopted in turn by each of the participants, the child exposes their problems and vulnerabilities to the rest of the troupe. It was far too complicated and wordy and, frankly, I wish I hadn't made it".* Avati put his younger brother Antonio in both of these movies but, *"He was too shy to be an actor. Too polite. I much prefer it now he's my producer as he makes it possible for me to direct all the personal movies I want. He's sacrificed*

everything for me and I'll never be able to repay him. Plus a lot of the films he's co-written with me have featured my best work".

Antonio Avati added, *"I acted in my brothers' first two films - BALSAMUS, THE MAN OF SATAN and THOMAS THE POSSESSED - but it was clear I didn't have the talent to continue in that profession. So Pupi convinced me to become his assistant director, co-writer and eventually producer. We formed a company with producer Gianni Minervini (AMA Film) for THE HOUSE WITH LAUGHING WINDOWS which turned out to be a very lucky movie for us all in terms of box-office success, critical acclaim and festival recognition. From that moment on I learnt everything about the business side of the industry and we have never looked back. I look after all the day-to-day problems and leave Pupi to do what he does best, direct with great technical power and emotional sensitivity".*

Avati's power and sensitivity combined to masterful effect in **THE HOUSE WITH LAUGHING WINDOWS**, his signature Horror film, which tells the story of young painter Stefano (Lino Capolicchio) in Fifties Emilia-Romagna restoring a graphic fresco of Saint Sebastian being tortured, which a local artist - dubbed 'The Painter of Agonies' by the townsfolk - daubed on the church wall. As murder and superstition dog his assignment, the horrific truth about the artist and his obsession with death leads Stefano into a web of incest, violent suicide, morbid degeneracy and madness. Brilliantly observed and told with exceptional skill and control, Avati's eerie shocker is a masterpiece of soul-searing depth and bone-chilling imagery. He remarked, *"I've always been fascinated by the world of ghosts and spirits and the strange mysteries of life. I based the film around an event that was told to me as a child. During World War II, a bomb opened up all the graves in my village cemetery and it was discovered that the recently deceased priest was actually a woman. That story became the heart of my inspiration for the film and the modish violence I depicted was very much the current fashion in Italian cinema at the time".*

A year later Avati directed **TUTTI DEFUNTI... TRANNE I MORTI** ('Everyone Deceased Except the Dead'), a rare example of successful comedy Horror Italian-style with as much farcical mugging and subversive slapstick as warped characters and creepy murders. Set in the Thirties, it tells of book researcher Dante (Carlo Della Piane) travelling to an isolated Emilia-Romagna castle to look at an old manuscript predicting the deaths of the long-standing Zanetti family. Arriving as the Zanettis are mourning the recent passing of their patriarch, the corpses soon start piling up as Dante peruses the ancient parchment. Very

much an arch interpretation of Agatha Christie's *Ten Little Indians* crime thriller, Avati's improvisational exercise was seen by the director as the perfect antidote to the stark terror of **THE HOUSE WITH WINDOWS THAT LAUGH**. He said, "I didn't want to follow one Horror film with another identical one. So I decided to poke fun at the genre and play around with it. It was interesting for me to play the scares for laughs rather than fright. I didn't want to be typecast in the Horror mould either, so redefining the genre through laughter helped me keep a professional and personal distance".

Avati's most improvised Fantasy followed two years later. **LE STRELLE NEL FOSSO** - the title is untranslatable in English - revolved around the impact a young woman has on a father and his four sons when she arrives on an enchanted island looking for a husband. He added, "I think **LE STRELLE NEL FOSSO** is my best film because it's the most inspired, the most sincere and the least rational. If anyone were to ask me what connects my body of work together, it's that they have a determinedly irrational quality. Edward Furlong's character in **KNIGHTS OF THE QUEST** continues that approach. When he dies, and is brought back to life with the aid of a dead sheep, I want audiences to question what they've just seen. Is it a miracle? How is it possible? Was he even dead in the first place? We should all live without explanations to some extent and it's my job to show how important that is. Life is often very strange and unexplainable, so why not put that on film? How is it possible that the children in **THE STORY OF BOYS AND GIRLS** run with the angels? I don't think it is, but I let it happen anyway. Why should we think we know the answers to everything? I certainly don't, and the best parts of my movies are the ones where the audience makes of them what they wish".

After producing Lamberto Bava's feature debut **MACABRE** (1980) with his brother and directing the musical fantasy **DANCING PARADISE** (1982), Avati helmed another of his well-known Horror entries. Produced originally as a RAI TV miniseries, and cut down to feature length for international release, **ZEDER, VOICES FROM THE BEYOND** (1983) told the tale of journalist Stefano (Gabriele Lavia) discovering some readable text on an old typewriter ribbon. Deciphering the words, he manages to reconstruct the history of Fifties scientist Paolo Zeder who discovered certain religious archaeological digs and ancient burial sites still contained the power to revive the dead. Stefano soon realises that followers of Zeder are again experimenting with his theories and trying to bring back to life a defrocked priest who held vital information they need

to continue his zombie research. Avati said, "The story was based on a real person named Fulcanelli, a French expatriate who lived at the beginning of the last century, and was supposedly the holder of alchemic secrets doomed from ancient religious texts. I changed the alchemy truth into the key to eternal life and came up with the typewriter device when I bought a second-hand one from a musician friend. Originally I was thinking in terms of making a **RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK** type of adventure involving the Knights Templar but that would have been too costly for television".

ZEDER marked the end of Avati's early interest in the Fantasy genre until he returned to it with a vengeance over a decade later with **THE ARCANES ENCHANTER** (1996). Originally planned as a vehicle for Anthony Hopkins, the story set in rural Bologna, 1750, starred Carlo Cecchi as a necromancer living in an old castle who, together with a young novice (Stefano Dionisi), baits a trap for the demonic spirit of his last devil-worshipping secretary. A subtle and gradually creepy ghost story that deliberately harkened back to the old glory days of Riccardo Freda and Mario Bava's strong-on-atmosphere Gothic confections, **THE ARCANES ENCHANTER** once more linked the supernatural with everyday reality in typical Avati fashion.

As indeed does **KNIGHTS OF THE QUEST** which is dedicated to his grandson Matteo. Avati said, "Matteo died when he was only fifteen days old and it happened just as I was beginning to write the script. He's buried in a small cemetery close to my country house where I keep all my books on medieval history and where I write. I can see his grave from my office window and I felt very close to him when I was writing **KNIGHTS** because all young boys love swashbuckling adventures. He would have loved it".

He added, "I started reading about this pre-medieval period about fifteen years ago. We know practically everything about the period after the 13th. century but very little about what came before it. From the end of the Roman Empire to the beginning of the medieval period, nothing has been written except by some French scholars in the last thirty years. I've already made one movie based on my research, **MAGNIFICAT**, but that took a more didactic and academic approach. As I couldn't put everything I wanted to in that film, I decided to go back and make an adventure fable out of the fascinating period which would appeal to younger audiences".

He continued, "I love the fact that it was a time of violence, religion and superstition mixed up together. The five knights in my story discover they are culturally different but together they can work miracles. They represent the five digits of one hand. Separately they are of some use, but it's when they come together

to form a complete hand that they can achieve so much more. However, they only become a hand, not a brain, so they still remain the instrument of others. They are the chosen ones who must embark on a strange adventure to find redemption and the truth. They bond like a family and finally come to realise they are not completely alone. That's what makes them able to face the dangers on the journey and ultimately their own selves".

Avati has the knights searching for the Shroud of Turin for one main reason as he explained. "There is something so weird surrounding that relic. Some people think it's a fake icon, that the imprint of Christ is painted on. The Church do and it's still a very controversial subject. It disappeared for 150 years and turned up again in France in 1355. How is that possible and is it the same shroud? Author Colin Wilson wrote a wonderful hypothesis about this dark period in the Shroud's history and I must admit to following his well-researched opinion. I also love the idea of one quest that takes up your whole life to fulfil. Modern society has meant we have daily quests of variable importance with differing goals. There is nothing in my story apart from the quest. No love story, just the quest, but it's enough for my five protagonists. **KNIGHTS OF THE QUEST** has been written by an old man who knows that whatever quest you embark on there has to be a certain price to pay. That's the moral heart of the story. In those times, that price usually came with violence so we show that and don't flinch from depicting it. But I don't think audiences will be expecting for one minute the final events that lead to the film's climax even though I believe it's an inevitable conclusion".

Although it seems on the surface that Avati has cast **KNIGHTS OF THE QUEST** in order to appeal to a wide international audience, the director refutes that. He pointed out, "The actors in my movies are always there for certain reasons. I never write with casting in mind. I always do it afterwards. Raoul Bova is one of Italy's top models and TV stars but he clearly has so much more talent beyond what he's usually asked to do. Bova was at a point in his career where he needed to be challenged and he seriously wanted to make a movie with me. We had met before because he appeared in the TV film **IL SINDACO** ['The Mayor'] that I produced. If someone wants something that badly, how can I refuse to give them the chance to prove themselves? Edward Furlong was our casting agent's idea. We went to New York to meet him six weeks before shooting and he impressed us by having a great feeling for the role. He also asked me lots of questions about the story so we hired him. From that moment on I looked at the cast like a dinner party. Who else can I invite and where can I place them so the chemistry will work? I cast people I want to be around and spend time with. What's the

point otherwise? Perhaps the knights aren't the best actors in the world but I like them, I know I can work with them and I know I won't get bored by them. I will never cast people who have too strong a personality because they often have more impact on screen beyond what I wanted. I've done that in the past and they've off-balanced the whole movie. They changed it from my original intention and I don't like that. My movies are my movies and I want audiences to know they represent my views, not the lead actor's! I use the same technicians all the time because I want an intimate relationship with them, too. If they are going to share my dreams, I want to know who they really are. That's why I discuss every detail about the script with every crew member before we start shooting. I've discovered over the years that most people are working for the money and constantly looking at their watch. I don't want that ever to happen so I draw people as close to me as I can. I won't discuss acting with actors in any intellectual way either because I hate that too. I tell them what's required in pure and simple terms and let them get on with it".

Edward Furlong had never heard of Pupi Avati when he received the script for **KNIGHTS OF THE QUEST**. The 22 year-old actor said, "My agent advised me to read it saying I'd really like it - and I did. The script had a rare quality you don't see in American ones. It wasn't shallow, it had enormous depth and it was about having faith and believing in something so strongly you're willing to die for its value. Everyone loves the period, don't they? King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table and all that. It has been great fun swinging swords around although I have had trouble with my horse riding because I hate the animals. I'd never ridden before prior to this movie and it was a nightmare learning how in just three weeks. I'm certain you'll clearly see I'm petrified in those scenes! But the Nintendo 64 game 'Zelda' is one of my all-time favourites and I'm thrilled to be dressed exactly like Link, its main character, in **KNIGHTS!**".

He continued, "Simon of Clarendon represents strength and goodness, someone who is trying to do the right thing with absolute faith in God. He starts off as an innocent but, the moment he steps into the real world, he loses that quality by running into the weirdest events. I mean, the character dies at one point, but he's brought back from the dead by having the carcass of a dead sheep draped over his body. So essentially I'm a zombie for half of the film. But Pupi is so straight-forward about what he wants and, happily, doesn't drone on about motivation or stuff like that. He pulls us together for rehearsals and tells us if we're doing something wrong. It's my first film outside the States, I can't speak Italian and I had no idea what I was getting into. But the experience has been better than I ever expected because Pupi is such a great artist".

Furlong may be the American focus of **KNIGHTS OF THE QUEST** but, for Italian audiences, the big news is that it also marks the first serious attempt by Raoul Bova to leave his modelling career and parts in fluffy romances and cop dramas behind once and for all. Virtually unknown outside his native shores, 29 year-old Bova is the biggest star in Italy thanks to his continuing role in the top-rated Mafia miniseries **LA PIOVRA / THE OCTOPUS** now up to a staggering nine adventures. Mobbed by fans everywhere he goes, and regular fodder for the tabloid press, Bova was recently seen on the international front as the handsome hunk Madonna kissed in her Max Factor commercials. Although he's a regular on television - his last miniseries was **ULTIMO 2: LA SFIDA / ULTIMO 2: THE CHALLENGE** (1999) directed by Michele Soavi - the titles of the films he has appeared in to date, including **PICCOLO GRANDE AMORE / PRETTY PRINCESS** (1993), **MUTANDE PAZZE / CRAZY UNDERWEAR** (1992) and **LA LUPA / SHE-WOLF** (1996), tell their own story of an actor mainly typecast as the handsome lead or the dedicated policeman.

Bova said, "Pupi called me up and said, 'I want to give you this chance because I think you're a good actor but you've never been able to show that to the world'. It was the moment I've waited for all my life - to work with a fabulous script, some terrific actors and a great director. I've always been rather sad that I've never been anything more than the heartthrob in not very important movies. I knew there had to be something more to me and Pupi seems to have recognised that".

Bova lost ten kilos for his black sheep role at Avati's request, cut his hair short, had his face scarred with make-up and listened attentively to his advice about playing the key part. He continued, "Pupi told me not to prepare too much although I did read some books about the period. He told me to simply remember the lines, come on set and feel the part. For a while he kept calling me too theatrical and said I was overdoing it. I soon understood what he meant as I have a tendency to hide behind the expressions I know work for my audience to protect myself. I was extremely scared about crying on camera in a pivotal scene where I can't cross myself in a monastery because of Satan being in my soul. But Pupi guided me through the emotional crisis and, when I saw him crying off camera in genuine response, I knew I had reached a new level in my career. That was such an important moment for me. The magical energy that seems to surround this film has been a wonderful experience and one that has allowed me to learn more about the craft of acting than I'd ever thought possible".

The second Italian sex symbol in **KNIGHTS OF THE QUEST** is 28 year-old Marco Leonardi who became an instant star thanks to his role as the boy in **CINEMA PARADISO**. His other films include **LIKE WATER FOR CHOCOLATE**, **THE STENDHAL SYNDROME**, **TEXAS RANGER** and **FROM DUSK TILL DAWN: HANGMAN'S DAUGHTER**. Leonardi said, "I had to make this movie because I wanted to make another film in my native Italy. I live in Los Angeles now and when Pupi called and offered me the role I jumped at it. I'd also worked with Pupi before on his soccer movie **ULTIMO MINUTO** and was anxious to repeat the experience because he makes you take risks to discover the truth in the role you are playing".

He continued, "Ranieri di Panico was a real historical character, an adventurer, who like me left his home to find his destiny in the outside world. For twenty minutes or so, you're going to think Ranieri is a real asshole. Then, thanks to the consideration of the other knights, you discover he's really a nice guy with a chip on his shoulder because his father treated him like a dog. In fact, there's a line in the movie that basically says I'm a dog, except I don't bite, I just bark. Ranieri is the one who finds the letter about the Shroud of Turin and it's mainly because of him that the other knights band together and set out on the impossible quest. I didn't do much research on the real Ranieri mainly because of the time scale between being cast and the start of shooting. Pupi never wanted us to be so strictly reigned in by facts anyway. The film has been difficult to make for everyone because the stunts are hard, the costumes unbearable to wear in the heat and the fact we're doing a lot of night shooting. But there's a connection between all the actors playing the knights that really shines through on screen and we have made it with excess love, passion and commitment".

Stanislas Merhar thinks he knows why the actors playing the knights have the proper connection. The 29 year-old French actor, who won a Cesar Award - the French Oscar - as Best Young Male Performer for **NETTOYAGE A SEC** in 1997, pointed out, "Just like our characters in the story, we are all from different cultures, speak with different accents, and have been thrown together as an ensemble. Pupi cast me because he said I had the perfect look for the era. The problem initially was that I didn't speak any English when we first met. Two months later, after much tuition, I got the part. Frankly, I was completely lost at the beginning of production and felt remote and depressed. However, again just like in the script, my hesitant friendship with the four other knights blossomed and I now feel part of what was a completely alien experience at first. It didn't help either that I

honestly didn't have a clue how important Pupi was in the Italian film industry".

The fifth knight Vanni delle Rondini is played by rising German star Thomas Kretschman. Recently seen in the hit blockbuster **U-571** and **PRINCE VALIANT** and, with co-star Leonardi, in **THE STENDHAL SYNDROME**, Kretschman's role was originally to be played by yet another popular Italian sex symbol, Kim Rossi Stuart. However, creative differences between Avati and Rossi Stuart (the son of Sixties superstar Giacomo Rossi Stuart) meant that Kretschman finished off his latest German assignment in Sardinia on the Friday and reported for work on **KNIGHTS OF THE QUEST** the next Monday for principal photography. Kretschman said, "I was exhausted but, after reading the **KNIGHTS** script, I jumped in head first. The script was full of fun, weird stuff that really sparked my imagination. Vanni is supposed to be Italian so I've spent every spare moment working on my accent with my dialogue coach Mark Ashworth. I don't think you can hear a trace of German in my speech now".

At 38 years of age Kretschman is the oldest of the knights but he's the most experienced when it comes to such action-orientated movies. "And thank God for that because I came on this show so late in the game that it would have been impossible to learn everything from the beginning. It really has been a case of remembering all the stunt tricks from **U-571**, **PRINCE VALIANT** and **STALINGRAD** [his first German success] and re-applying them. What I like most about the movie is that it's a true representation of how people lived back then. None of the brutality of the era has been watered down. Yet, through it all, there's this hard to resist streak of humanity. Raoul's character, Giacomo, makes this fabulous sword and the deal is I have to take him along on the quest as my squire. After making that promise, I look in his eyes, see his true soul, and stick with him through thick and thin because I'm very loyal. Like everyone else in the story, Vanni is searching for purpose to his life. He wants to have a goal so if he dies, he knows existing was worth it".

One of the few newcomers on Avati's **KNIGHTS OF THE QUEST** crew is special effects supervisor Danilo Bolletini. Avati needed to utilise computer graphics for certain key sequences and Bolletini was one of the few Italian technicians up to speed in that specialised department. Bolletini works exclusively for the special effects company owned by the Corridori brothers whose names have graced the credits of many high profile Italian releases including Sergio Leone's **ONCE UPON A TIME IN AMERICA** and Dario Argento's **TENEBRAE** and

PHENOMENA. Run by Tonino and Giovanni Corridori, the company was started by their father Tobia after he rose to fame in the sixties working on **BEN-HUR** and **CLEOPATRA**. Bolletini said, "While there are no special effects on a big scale in **KNIGHTS OF THE QUEST**, Pupi wanted to show things actually happening as opposed to just the aftermath. For example, we show an arrow piercing right through a body and, in the main challenge, a hatchet flying through the air, slashing a horse so its guts fall out, and finally chopping off the rider's leg. It's a question of combining computer graphics with physical reality".

Pupi Avati said, "I wanted to write **KNIGHTS OF THE QUEST** for two reasons. One, to give young people the chance to immerse themselves in a good old-fashioned adventure and, two, to underline how brutal, yet human, the pre-medieval period actually was. That's why this epic will be as different as possible from every other one you've seen before. The Italians haven't made a great adventure fable for over thirty years at least and I figured it was about time for another try at that great tradition. I haven't made it as a deliberate attempt to become internationally famous because that sort of thing isn't important. I don't have the reputation Dario Argento has so people don't expect me to deliver the same type of movie each time. I make the movie I want to make and I think I'm probably rare in that field. I'm not rich, I don't have penthouses or mistresses, but I'm free to do whatever I choose. That is priceless to me and it won't change even if **KNIGHTS OF THE QUEST** is an enormous world wide success".

On one location at Bari beach on **KNIGHTS OF THE QUEST**, Avati gave this instruction to his five lead actors: "I want you to come out of the darkness slowly". In so many ways that sums up what all his films are about, as he explained: "Every character emerges into the light in life-changing ways. While I always want my movies to be entertaining, they must also say something important. There's absolutely no point in dealing with too small a reality is there?"

Addendum: Sadly, **KNIGHTS OF THE QUEST** was not the international success Avati's admirers were hoping. Although it received some positive notices in Italy, attendances were disappointing and the consensus was that at 2hrs 20mins the film was too long. 20th Century Fox failed to release the film theatrically in the USA but, for the curious, they have released the film on Italian DVD: aspect ratio 2.35:1 adapted for 16:9 with optional English subtitles. Avati is still planning a remake of his macabre landmark film, **THE HOUSE WITH LAUGHING WINDOWS**. Initially the updated story was going to be relocated to America, but he's now decided not to change too much from the original screenplay "The story's impact is strong because of its particular location and Italian sensibility". Avati reflects, "I've now realised the madness in shifting it away from its origins".

UN FILM DI PUPPI AVATI





Presented in extraordinary 60:40 spec. THE SILVER GLOBE

Zulawski and Polish Cinema

by *Daniel Bird*

A film is inseparable from the culture in which it is produced, bringing a unique political and historical context from its country of origin. Take for example Milos Forman's **LÁSKY JEDNÉ PLAVOVLÁSKY/A BLONDE IN LOVE**, Roman Polanski's **NOZ W WODZIE/KNIFE IN THE WATER** or Walerian Borowczyk's **DZIEJE GRZECU/ THE STORY OF SIN**, and compare them with **ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST**, **CHINATOWN** and **BLANCHE**. Zulawski's work is no exception. Unlike the latter filmmakers though, Zulawski never really left his native country. He has been able to return and to an extent work in both Paris and Warsaw, though not without difficulty.

Andrzej Zulawski was born on 22nd of November 1940 in Lvov, which at the time was part of the Ukraine. He was the eldest of three children: his younger brother Lukasz is a painter, and Matheau is a writer and translator. Their father Mirosław was a writer and diplomat, a founder member of UNESCO. Andrzej spent his late teens in Paris studying film at IDHEC, and produced his thesis on Andrzej Wajda's **KANAL** (1957). He then returned to Poland. His assistance to Wajda on **SAMSON** in 1960 was interrupted by a year studying political science back in Paris, after which he returned to Warsaw where he read philosophy until 1965. Throughout this period Zulawski assisted Wajda on his episode for **L'AMOUR À VINGT ANS/LOVE AT TWENTY** (1962) and **POPIOLY/ASHES** (1965). He also wrote film criticism for the magazine *FILM* as well as the novel *Kino* which was banned by the Polish authorities. After making two television films in 1968, **PAVONCELLO** (based on the story by Stefan Zerowski whose writing formed the basis of both Wajda's **ASHES** and Borowczyk's **DZIEJE GRZECU**) and **THE SONG OF TRIUMPHANT LOVE** by Ivan Tourgueniev, Andrzej collaborated on various French scripts before directing **TRZECIA CZESC NOCY/ THE THIRD PART OF THE NIGHT** in 1971.

THE THIRD PART OF THE NIGHT was based on a story by Mirosław Zulawski set during the occupation. It involved people who had fleas bred upon their bodies in order to manufacture typhus vaccine. Like Bergman's **SKAMMEN/SHAME**, human values are eroded to the point of barbarity, in a hallucinatory style which was to become even more vivid in Zulawski's subsequent work. What distinguishes **THE THIRD PART OF THE NIGHT** from the majority of post-war Polish cinema concerned with war and occupation is its point of view: "*the generation of sons looking at the experiences of their fathers in an attempt to understand the philosophic, moral and human sense of the lesson afforded by the times of contempt*" (Jacek Fuksiewicz). **THE THIRD PART OF THE NIGHT** is also significant in two other ways. Firstly it looked back and paid off a debt in many ways to Wajda. Secondly the film's leading actress was Małgorzata Braunek, who was to play a major role in Zulawski's life and work.

His second film, **DIABEL/THE DEVIL**, was produced by Wajda's 'Film X' unit and starred both Braunek (by then married to Zulawski), and his brother Lukasz. Lukasz Zulawski was born in Paris where he stayed until he was 17, when he left for Poland. He studied painting and the history of Art in the Warsaw Academy of Fine Art. He also acted, working for Stodola, a Warsaw student club where he took part in cabaret based on Tuwim's texts. For a few seasons he acted with the Rzeszów Theatre and was asked by Hanuszkiewicz to play in National Theatre. He also met Jerzy Grotowski (whom he described as looking like a vampire) and Tadeusz Kantor. Whilst Grotowski's direction in his Theatre Laboratory proved a point of interest for Andrzej, Lukasz as an actor found his ideas too theoretical. Grotowski's ideas are to an extent assimilated in **THE DEVIL**. It is a period piece, based on Zulawski's own script and set in eighteenth century Poland. The film follows a

disillusioned Polish soldier, a nun, and a spy (the Devil of the title) through act after act of outrageous violence. People are reduced to caricatures of the most base traits of human nature, as they charge screaming through a disintegrating society, raping, decapitating, castrating and murdering each other. A primal scream is the only trait correlating each act in the episodic narrative. With **THE DEVIL** Zulawski marked himself as a powerful talent to be reckoned with. Unfortunately the Ministry of Culture did not permit distribution, and this ban was not lifted until 1987. The governing bureaucrats claimed **THE DEVIL** was just too depraved. Zulawski, however, maintains that the decision to shelve the film was political rather than moral.

"Nearly fifty years had elapsed since that memorable double expedition, the most daring ever conceived or carried out by man, the whole affair was almost forgotten when an article by the assistant astronomer of the small observatory in KÖ appeared in one of the local newspapers bringing it again into the focus of public opinion. The writer maintained that he was in possession of incontrovertible information about the fate of the dare-devils who had fifty years earlier been shot out into the Moon. The article caused considerable sensation, though at first it was not treated too seriously. Those who had heard or read about the unusual venture were convinced that the explorers had perished, and now shrugged their shoulders at the news that the reputedly dead were not only alive, but had succeeded in sending information about themselves from the Moon."

- the opening paragraph to *Na Srebnym Globie* by Jerzy Zulawski, from an unpublished translation by Firsof.

After filming the acclaimed **L'IMPORTANT C'EST D'AIMER/WHAT COUNTS IS LOVING** in France in 1975, Zulawski returned to Poland in 1976 to begin work on the epic task of adapting Jerzy Zulawski's *Moon Trilogy*. Jerzy was a distinguished writer and philosopher who had specialised in Spinoza's ethics. He was also an excellent mountaineer who put up several major routes in the Tatra mountain range. He died of typhoid at the age of forty in the trenches of the first world war. His *Moon Trilogy* is a science fiction epic with a scope to rival Frank Herbert's *Dune*. It has been translated and published in almost every European language, as well as Japanese. Surprisingly, though, it has yet to be published in English. Andrzej's new found international reputation commanded a huge crew, expensive sets and huge crowds of extras for this long cherished project,

titled **NA SREBNYM GLOBIE/THE SILVER GLOBE**. Although he might have anticipated that the production would be complicated and that meeting the deadline would be difficult, perhaps he didn't quite expect the heavy handed way in which politics were to stunt the production. The problems began with the appointment of a new assistant minister of Culture, Janus Wilhelmi. Wilhelmi was a literary critic who subsequently specialised in creating friction between governing bureaucrats and filmmakers. Zulawski was his first target. Wilhelmi cited the delay and over-expenditure on **THE SILVER GLOBE** as two good reasons to halt the production and destroy the sets, after Zulawski had managed to shoot approximately two thirds of the film in the Gobi desert. The director Agnieszka Holland elaborates that **THE SILVER GLOBE** was an exceptional form of censorship: "There are two institutions. The first is censorship by the Ministry of Culture for cinema films. Each script has to be seen by a representative of the Ministry of Culture. It is not called censorship, but in fact that is what it is. In order to obtain finance for a production you must have an agreement from the Ministry for the project or for the scenario. Of course many scenarios are censored so they never get off the ground. But during shooting, until today there was no interference apart from a rare exception. Zulawski for example, had some problems some years ago with a science fiction film. It was after four months, he had shot about 80% of the script. Then it was stopped; completely absurd because it was so expensive. They destroyed all the sets and all of the costumes."

The footage was sent to the archives and the production unit was dissolved. For many filmmakers, this was the last straw and Wilhelmi's decision was followed by a violent reaction involving petitions and protests. The state of production of **THE SILVER GLOBE** remained unresolved for a further two years. Zulawski still had faith in the beautiful, bizarre material his crew had shot, and returned to the Gobi to recover as much of the sets and costumes as possible to resume shooting. **THE SILVER GLOBE** was eventually completed in 1986. Zulawski himself gave a commentary over erratic camera work around Warsaw linking the fragments of footage together. The result is a very unique film indeed, with set pieces including a huge underground cave, writhing with heavily painted bodies, encased in rich costumes derived from Samurai warriors and stag beetles. Real industrial installations are manipulated to stand in as part of a future world, like Godard's use of contemporary Paris in **ALPHAVILLE**

or Tarkovsky's **SOLARIS**. The most hallucinatory sequences in the film take place on the coast; one amazing scene features rows of bloody bodies skewered on sixty foot poles alongside the shore. Wilhelmi meanwhile was busy rigging the 1977 Gdansk film festival, so that neither films produced by Wajda's 'Film X' unit, Zanussi's 'Tor' or Kawalerowicz's 'Kadr' (responsible for Lenica and Borowczyk's animations) would receive any award whatsoever. Rumours that the latter units were to be dissolved were brought to an abrupt halt in the spring of 1978 when Wilhelmi died in a plane crash on route to Bulgaria. The political hostility between bureaucrats and filmmakers was drastically reduced. However in 1979 Zulawski's script **THE HUNTERS IN THE ORCHID** was refused by the Polish authorities, and Zulawski left for Paris with a script based on the break up of his marriage to Malgorzata Braunek, titled **POSSESSION**.

He returned to Poland in 1996 to film **SZAMANKA**, based on a script by a Polish author, Manuela Gretkowska. It concerns the intensely sexual relationship between an anthropology lecturer, Michael (Boguslaw Linda) and a nineteen year old engineering student, The Italian (Iwona Petry). Michael has recently being assigned the remains of an ancient shaman discovered in a peat bog, beside a factory just outside Warsaw. His engagement to an architect by the name of Anna is disrupted by an affair with The Italian. The Italian leaves her home village to study in Warsaw, stealing from her mother. She is drawn back to the village when she accompanies Michael to identify the body of his brother, a priest who had committed suicide because of his homosexuality. The Italian's father beats her before forcing her to work in a meat processing factory (which adds rats to the produce for good measure) to fund her studies in Warsaw. The Italian becomes integral to Michael's obsession with the shaman, who speaks to him during a heavy dope session. The shaman tells Michael that The Italian had destroyed him. Meanwhile, on discovery of Michael's affair with The Italian, Anna, being a good architect, commits suicide by throwing herself through an unfinished sky light. Michael becomes increasingly puzzled by the presence of female semen up the backside of the shaman, and employs The Italian in a practical exercise involving himself to discover how exactly it got there. Eventually Michael gives up, turns to religion and dresses up in his dead brother's smock before being hit on the head with a can of meat which The Italian had probably turned out the night before. The Italian proceeds to ecstatically

eat Michael's brains with a spoon before the outbreak of World War Three or Four (don't ask, I don't know...).

Manuela Gretkowska had read philosophy and anthropology in Paris. She pursued a career in journalism during the late eighties and early nineties, as well as writing several readable books concerning new age issues: *My zdes emigranty* 1990, *Tarot parysky*, 1992 *Kabaret metafizyczny* 1994 (all were translated into French last year for Flammarion). She has also edited *Polish Elle* since 1995. **SZAMANKA** is Zulawski's most interesting film in some time (**BORIS GODOUNOV** was in fact a project inherited when Wajda backed out). The sensational yet hostile response to **SZAMANKA** in Poland was comparable to the one that met David Cronenberg's **CRASH** in England, but was founded on many rumours that surrounded the production. The Polish media focused upon their notorious prodigal son, here picking up an 18 year old sociology student in a Warsaw café and placing her in a major international production alongside Poland's leading actor Boguslaw Linda, who is for the Polish mainstream Bruce Willis, Harrison Ford and Mel Gibson all rolled into one suave tattooed but sensitive hard guy. Not only that, the film involved violent, explicit sex, anthropology, shamanism, Catholicism and cannibalism. Stories spread about Zulawski's treatment of Petry, the least of which was forcing the vegetarian actress to eat unprocessed meat during several scenes. Shades of Grotowski emerged as voodoo was rumoured to be his technique of extracting her performance. Another rumour suggested that the crew threatened to walk off the set if the director went ahead with a planned scene involving a truck load of rats being fed into a meat grinder in the aforementioned meat factory. The film's greatest asset is the unhinged performance of Petry. She seems to stagger through each scene uncontrollably, with a manic stare, like a beautiful pouting spider on speed. Zulawski talked in various interviews prior to the disastrous French reception of **SZAMANKA** in March about his choice of actress, elaborated that he'd never use a fake actress like Juliet Binoche, and that he'd much prefer an actress to use as much of herself in the role as possible. Unsurprisingly, Petrykowska was put under progressively more mental stress during the production. Reportedly hostile to Zulawski, she left Poland afterwards to escape the rumours that she was undergoing a nervous breakdown and spent some time in London, before returning to Warsaw. One of Zulawski's few supporters at this time was



Polish *Elle* magazine. Gretkowska published an interview with Petry who dispelled the rumours, detailing the difficulty she had during the production distinguishing between the chaos on and off the film, and how she had since apologised to Zulawski. Petry subsequently appeared on Polish television, talking openly about *SZAMANKA* in a positive manner and her ambitions to continue acting.

Andrzej Zulawski is currently directing the patriotic Polish opera *The Haunted Manor* by Stanislaw Moniuszko, in

the Warsaw Opera House. Over the last twenty five years he has produced easily one of the most colourful and dynamic bodies of work in European cinema. He has the ability to grip, irritate and even infuriate the most passive of filmgoers, as well as maintaining a childishness, something that often degenerates into mere cynicism and anal retention after the first decade or so of the careers of most "original" filmmakers.

Thanks to Darek Misuna, Ewa Strzalek, Tomasz Szumski, Lukasz Zulawski and Marila Zulawska

Monochrome Magick

by Ramsey Campbell

On the whole the cinema has not been kind to supernatural prose fiction, monster movies always excepted. By the mid-forties so little had been successfully filmed that the insipid **UNINVITED**, a trivial novel subjected to adaptation by Cornelia Otis Skinner (an American humorist) and direction by Lewis Allen, could be hailed as an achievement. It was left to Val Lewton to grace Hollywood with some real frissons of spectral terror, though even he was defeated by the task of filming Algernon Blackwood's *Ancient Sorceries*. (Since he made **CAT PEOPLE** instead, the loss is bearable). The British weighed in with **DEAD OF NIGHT**, distinguished by Robert Hamer's mirror episode and Cavalcanti's story of ventriloquism gone mad. The attempt to film E.F. Benson's *The Bus Conductor* suffered from the stolidness of Basil Dearden (a director of whose worth not even Charles Barr can persuade me); worse, *The Inexperienced Ghost* by H.G. Wells was turned into a facetious golfing anecdote. On balance it seems Ealing Studios might have betrayed M.R. James, but twelve years later Lewton's best director took him on and made what could have been a masterpiece.

I mean **NIGHT OF THE DEMON - CURSE** if you're American or buy the British video - the film version of *Casting the Runes*. Some admirers of James object to the updating of the story, and prefer the series of adaptations made for the BBC - used to reminisce about them, at any rate. Recent repeats haven't improved the reputations of the television films (though *Lost Hearts* captures much of the ruthlessness, and some of the terror, of the original tale). Though whenever possible the films use the locations James had in mind, they seldom convey his sense of haunted landscapes, and show little imagination when it comes to the supernatural: the thing like, but horribly unlike, a leather bag in *The Treasure of Abbot Thomas* is replaced by some ooze of the kind early Hammer science fiction films emitted at their climaxes, and the skeletal pursuer with his

lungless laugh from *A Warning to the Curious* is represented by a man photographed out of focus, a woefully irritating effect. Television has had its successes, however: the adaptation of Le Fanu's *Schalken the Painter* done for *Omnibus* boasts a hideously cadaverous revenant, all the more frightful by contrast with the Vermeer-esque beauty of the production, and by far the most frightening purely Jamesian apparition on film is the shapeless spectre prowling a beach in Jonathan Miller's TV version of *Oh Whistle and I'll Come to You My Lad*. This also established Michael Holdern as an ideal Jamesian actor, though some aficionados felt that the film's sense of his solitariness was too oppressive, and the hint of a Freudian explanation too obtrusive. (While Arthur Machen's *The White Powder* is unquestionably about self-abuse - read it again if you doubt me - I should say that James's image of the sheet that raises itself refers not to onanism but to the cliché of the sheeted ghost, a concept he gives new life by revealing the dreadful absence beneath the sheet). Two cinema films borrowed from James without acknowledging the source - the episode of the three padlocks on Count Magnus's coffin turns up, too brightly lit, in **THE BRIDES OF DRACULA**, and a passage of Michele Soavi's **THE CHURCH** is at least as true to *The Treasure of Abbot Thomas* as the BBC film was.

Which brings me, however clumsily, back to the BBC versions of James. Their fundamental mistake - only the Miller is powerful enough really to overcome it - is to appeal to nostalgia, perhaps because the makers took James at his word. He suggested that the ghost story should be set in the past or somewhere suggestive of it, but unlike most writers, he seems not to be talking about his own work when purporting to discuss his entire genre. In fact some of his most memorable effects were achieved by the invasion of what was then the mundane present by the unquiet dead and the dreadfully inhuman. This is especially true of

Casting the Runes, which makes crucial use of such items as a Thomas Cook's ticket folder and an advertising panel on a tram, and so the decision to bring the story of **NIGHT OF THE DEMON** up to date (for 1957) is true to the spirit of the original.

Some of the memorable scenes in the film are taken directly from James: the encounter in the British Museum reading room, the calendar that ends at the victim's imminent death, the attempt to pass the runic parchment back to Carswell on the train. On the other hand, the children's show Carswell hosts is radically changed. James has him terrifying the children to keep them off his property: in the film he invites them there for an annual magic show which gradually, as his intended victim shows up to observe him, turns more real, reaching its climax in a storm he summons to blast a tree. (Intriguingly, the protagonist of **THE CRAFT** - in a scene which may be intended as an homage - does exactly this to demonstrate her triumph at the end of the film.) This is one of the many episodes which make Carswell a far more complex and ambiguous figure than the simple critic-hunter of James's tale. Indeed, the script by Charles Bennett - the writer of several of Hitchcock's films - and a performance by Niall MacGinnis give us one of the most fully characterised villains in the cinema: suave, wily, ingratiating, quite possibly gay, in a complex Hitchcockian relationship with his mother, with powers that don't entirely compensate for the vulnerability we sometimes glimpse. The characterisation is as witty as James's prose style, the one obvious loss to the film, and Tourneur's sense of menace has never been subtler, not least in the handling of Carswell. He draws thoughtful performances from actors whose excellence was in danger of being forgotten - Dana Andrews, for example - and some whose worth was too seldom exploited, Peggy Cummins for one. Best of all, he has lost none of the skills for intense terror he developed in his years with Val Lewton, whereas Robert Wise tended to make too much fuss in his post-Lewton **THE HAUNTING** of how little he was showing, rather in the manner of a minor Lovecraft tale. The visual style of **NIGHT OF THE DEMON** strongly influenced Riccardo Freda (**I VAMPIRI, CALTIKI**) and Mario Bava (**LA MASCHERA DEL DEMONIO, LA RAGAZZA CHE SAPEVA TROPPO**). I may as well admit that it was the first horror movie with which, at the age of fifteen, I fell in love, from the opening voice-over accompanied by Clifton Parker's superb score (a voice-over slightly extended,

though not to any benefit, in the BBC's full length version under the title **NIGHT OF THE DEMON**). So why do I refrain from hailing it as a masterpiece? Well, not because of the demon - not in itself, at any rate. The first time I saw it make away with Maurice Denham in the opening few minutes remains one of my great nightmare moments in the cinema. Tourneur objected to its being seen, of course, and Charles Bennett complained that Hal E. Chester, the producer, had sabotaged his script. The problem is that the film, and in particular Andrews's performance, are constructed so that they progress from total scepticism about the supernatural through a series of episodes that cast doubt on such an entrenched position to a final terrified acceptance. It's a structure Lovecraft might have used, but by showing us the demon at the outset the film as released leaves the protagonist to catch up with what we already know. There remains the vexed question of who filmed the demon: not, apparently, Hal E. Chester himself. The film historian David Thomson discovered latterly that Cy Endfield, who had directed Cummins in **HELL DRIVERS** earlier that year, worked uncredited on **NIGHT OF THE DEMON**. Perhaps he was the man who filmed the monster before going on to quite a few of them in **MYSTERIOUS ISLAND**. Whoever's demon it was, I'm not alone in having it take up residence in my imagination: it was once celebrated in a cartoon by no less than Leo Baxendale, creator of 'Dennis the Menace'. It doesn't prevent - may even in its way be partly responsible for - my listing the film among my ten all-time favourite horror movies, a list that has hardly altered since I compiled it years ago for *Shock Xpress*, though **TWIN PEAKS: FIRE WALK WITH ME** creeps ever closer

James's influence on the twentieth-century tale of supernatural terror was considerable, even if many of his imitators were simply insipid. Work in the James tradition ranges from the excellent - Kingsley Amis's *The Green Man* is the most substantial - to the collectively wretched, the worst case being M.P. Dare's *Unholy Relics*, a collection Freudians should love (in one tale, a spectral nun manifests herself as "a flabby mass of warm, stinking flesh, covered with wet hairs" that slithers across the narrator's face). I learned a great deal from James, but take the all the blame for what I produced. In *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, Mike Ashley lists Robert Aickman as a follower of James, though Robert would have denied this, and I can't say I see it myself. James's influence wasn't confined to his homeland,

rune troubles: NIGHT OF THE DEMON



however. Two Americans who wrote magnificent tales that used his methods in contemporary settings are T.E.D. Klein and before him Fritz Leiber.

Like Lovecraft, his mentor, Leiber united the British and American traditions of his field. Several of his early tales, *Smoke Ghost* in particular, derive Jamesian manifestations from everyday life in Chicago. They are among the greatest urban supernatural tales. *Conjure Wife*, written for *Unknown Worlds* (John W. Campbell's fantasy companion to *Astounding*) is a novel that finds occult terrors in broad daylight on an American university campus, and their source in the faculty itself. It has been filmed twice.

WEIRD WOMAN (1944), one of Universal's Inner Sanctum series, is generally accounted a straightforward failure. Lon Chaney Jr plays the rationalist professor who discovers that his wife (Anne Gwynne) has been using magic in an attempt to protect him from malevolent influences. When he makes her destroy the protections, the menace is revealed as jilted Evelyn Ankers. This banalises

Leiber's ending, but I'm not sure I agree with the Aurum Encyclopaedia that all is explained away at the end - in fact some scenes are ambiguous enough to suggest that magic may have worked. However, there's no sense of the terror at the heart of Leiber's book. This, or some of it, had to wait for the second film.

This was the 1961 **NIGHT OF THE EAGLE** (known in America by the title of a novel by A. Merritt, **BURN WITCH BURN**). The director, Sidney Hayers, had previously made **CIRCUS OF HORRORS**, one of the exercises in sadism Anglo-Amalgamated produced to compete with Hammer - not too auspicious, one might think, though he had already directed **PAYROLL**, an unusually intense (certainly for British cinema) treatment of thieves falling out. But he responded fully to a script by Richard Matheson and Charles Beaumont, no less, even if (according to Robert Bloch) it was originally more faithful to Leiber's book (perhaps before the third credited writer, George Baxt, worked on it), and made arguably his best film.

It goes almost all the way. The casting is at least equal to the earlier version (Peter Wyngarde for Chaney, Janet Blair in place of Anne Gwynne) or decidedly superior, insofar as the author of their ills is played by the splendid Margaret Johnston, an insufficiently sung purveyor of cinematic menace to rank beside Catherine Lacey and Sheila Keith. Old hands such as Reginald Beckwith (the medium from **NIGHT OF THE DEMON**) and Colin Gordon prove more than adequate. The film improves on the set-pieces it shares with the 1944 version - the female student who becomes sexually obsessed with the professor, her boyfriend's attempt at revenge - but is strongest whenever it deals with the explicitly supernatural, which it does with Lewtonesque suggestiveness almost to the end: a scene in which something scratches and cries inhumanly outside the protagonist's house is especially powerful. If the final manifestation that pursues Wyngarde is slightly too literal, it's odd that this accusation is levelled at the film far more seldom than at Tourneur's demon. By then we've been treated to an unusually intelligent movie about the various shades of magic, which incidentally depicts possession long before **THE EXORCIST**. It's a triumph of restraint, as indeed is **NIGHT OF THE DEMON**. Is it time for the British horror film to rediscover that virtue? Somebody ought to, and undoubtedly someone will. It took the overstatement of films such as **THE WOLFMAN** to produce the response of Val Lewton after all.



Joe Dallesandro in Paul Morrissey's TRASH

Directed by Paul Morrissey

Ron Peck

I saw **FLESH** in London, in 1969, when I was 21. I remember the experience and the venue particularly well. The shock of the film was part of it, but there was a lot more to the night than that. Word about the screening had circulated through clandestine channels.. The film wasn't playing at a 'proper' cinema but in a dark basement somewhat off the beaten track. To get inside, I had to pay to join a club and sign my name in a book. The audience, I recall, was particularly furtive and predominantly male. It felt like the initiation into a secret ritual.

When the lights went down, the first images on the screen confronted us head on: a close-up of the face of a handsome young man sleeping, followed by a wide shot showing his full body, nude, prone, spread out on a bed, displayed for the admiration of the camera. The shots held and held and held. No cutting away. No drama. Just this male nude baring his backside to us, asleep.

I remember the dead silence interrupted only by awkward coughs. I was deeply embarrassed, and riveted; those opening shots, I guess, had something to do with why most of us in the audience had come into this dark hole in the first place. This was, after all, a forbidden image that we'd crossed London to see. No other screen in town was showing anything like this. Nor was this screen allowed to show it for long.

A couple of days after that first night screening, the police raided the cinema and took away both the film and the club membership book and for a week or so I expected uniformed officers to appear at my parents' suburban home and take me away for questioning. They never arrived. A battle to get the film back on the screen was fought by, of all people, the censor, John Trevelyan. The battle quickly became public news, columns written for and against, fanning publicity. Everything I read described the film as **ANDY WARHOL'S FLESH** and so I chalked up my first

Andy Warhol film in a pocket-book I kept at the time in which I listed all the films I saw, together with the names of their directors. I also had a rating system: one to three stars. This film got the full three.

Warhol, I decided, was obviously X-certificate stuff, sexy, subversive, controversial, realistic to a degree I hadn't seen before, truthful, shocking, ground-breaking. The scandal surrounding **FLESH**, the club status necessary to be able to see it, its highly publicised adult-rating, guaranteed it long-running notoriety and success. Like many others, I waited patiently for the next Warhol films and later chalked up **TRASH** and **HEAT**. It was only much later that I realised they had all been directed by Paul Morrissey.

About Morrissey I could find no information. No pictures. No biography. No list of credits. No articles in any of the film journals I took. Nothing about him in the newspapers. He was the invisible man. The situation hasn't changed a great deal since - some ten films and nearly twenty-five years on. Only the already-converted seem to know the name of Paul Morrissey. Whereas just about everyone has heard of Andy Warhol.

It leads straight to the conclusion that Paul Morrissey must be one of the most neglected filmmakers of the American cinema. And, in light of the little written about him, getting to grips with his film career presents peculiarly unique difficulties.

His earliest work, made prior to his involvement with Andy Warhol's Factory, is described in a recent (and very welcome) book as 'now-unavailable' (1). Half his work is generally identified as 'Andy Warhol's'. The later films are scarcely known at all; a result of poor, and sporadic, distribution and, in the case of **FORTY-DEUCE**, withdrawal of the film from circulation altogether by its producer. In Britain, at the time of writing, not one of his films since 1977 is available on videotape and only his last produced, **SPIKE**

OF BENSONHURST (1988), has been shown on (cable) TV, re-titled (so it's easy to miss) **THE MAFIA KID**. Given their subject-matter, language and treatment, few of his films are likely to get any kind of broadcast TV showing in Britain in the foreseeable future. Encouraging people to take a look at his work isn't easy.

It is hard to believe that the film-maker whose **FLESH** and **TRASH** caused such sensations on their initial UK release is now virtually unknown to a younger generation.

There are signs that this may now change, that some of his films may finally be released in this country (if only on video). And in 1993, the sheer dearth of writing on his work (as against the plethora of material on Warhol) found some kind of corrective in the publication of Maurice Yacowar's book.

How has it come to this, that one of America's most brilliantly individual and independent film-makers has suffered such critical neglect? The last five years or so has seen an upsurge in American independent cinema, with Steven Soderbergh, Quentin Tarantino, Spike Lee, Hal Hartley, Whit Stillman, Gregg Araki, Gus Van Sant and Allison Anders - to name but a few - creating a lively critical stir and finding audiences. Even John Cassavetes's work has been reappraised and made more generally available. And to a limited extent so has Warhol's. But Morrissey?

Yacowar puts this neglect down to a number of factors: Morrissey's 'reactionary' politics setting him well apart from the other independents, and the seemingly wilful confusion over attribution in the case of the films that were made with Warhol at the Factory.

Warhol-Morrissey and the Factory

Given the improvised group spirit in which the earlier Factory films were made, it may seem pedantic, even counter-productive, to look for precise attribution, but Morrissey's contribution has been all too consciously dismissed or buried and Yacowar's book represents an important start of some kind of corrective to this, some redressing of the balance.

MY HUSTLER, THE CHELSEA GIRLS, **, BIKE BOY, LOVES OF ONDINE, I, A MAN, LONESOME COWBOYS** are all works in dispute. One camp claims them as 'Andy Warhol' films. Another sees them as signs of Morrissey's creepingly corrupting influence. But an emerging camp is reclaiming them enthusiastically as films

directed by Paul Morrissey. It is this group that seems to be gaining ground, which may have to mean a complete revision of thinking about these films.

The work of Morrissey's 'middle period' is more easily sorted out. Although, on their initial UK release, **FLESH, TRASH** and **HEAT** were all issued as 'Andy Warhol films', they have been more quickly attributed to Morrissey, working under the 'house name' of the Warhol label. This has had mixed blessings. Though the critic John Russell Taylor was quick to recognise Morrissey's individual talents at the time and stuck with him, others saw the films as confirmation of the decadence, decline, commercialisation and sell-out identified as creeping into the earlier films.

The muddle continued even when Morrissey went to Cinecittà to shoot **FLESH FOR FRANKENSTEIN** and **BLOOD FOR DRACULA** (for, among others, producer Carlo Ponti). The Warhol label was too potentially lucrative an asset to cut Morrissey loose from and the films were publicised as **ANDY WARHOL'S FRANKENSTEIN** and **ANDY WARHOL'S DRACULA**, even though Warhol had no connection of any kind with either film.

It was only with the work that followed the Italian experience that the films were released without Warhol's name. **THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES, MADAME WANG'S, FORTY-DEUCE, MIXED BLOOD, BEETHOVEN'S NEPHEW** and **SPIKE OF BENSONHURST** are all clearly and singularly identified as 'directed by Paul Morrissey'. Significantly, perhaps, as Morrissey came into his own, Warhol gave up film-making; only **BAD** was made independently of Morrissey after they went their separate ways.

Attribution isn't resolved by settling on Warhol as 'producer' for certain of the films, since even this credit shifts around according to which book you read. In absolute fundamentals, the filmographies vary. The Jonas Mekas filmography for Warhol (1970) stops in 1968, but includes **MY HUSTLER, THE CHELSEA GIRLS, ****, I, A MAN** and **LONESOME COWBOYS**. The B.F.I. publication *Andy Warhol: Film Factory* (1989) additionally includes **FLESH, TRASH, WOMEN IN REVOLT, HEAT** and **L'AMOUR**. Yacowar's book includes all the above films in both filmographies as Morrissey's.

Perhaps the least contentious conclusion one can initially come to is that, from around 1965, Morrissey and Warhol worked together, whatever the exact differentiation of roles, and perhaps they are most productively seen as

collaborators throughout the period up until 1969. In this respect, it's important to remember that both Warhol and Morrissey were making films prior to their forming any kind of working association (Morrissey from 1961, Warhol from 1963)

As well as being credited with producing several of the earlier 'Warhol' films, Morrissey, more importantly, operated the camera as often as Warhol. To those who have so denigrated Morrissey's involvement at the Factory (Tony Rayns in the front line), once Morrissey got his hands on the camera it was the beginning of the end of the Factory experiment, introducing directorial controls and personally interpretative 'commentary' that denied the so-called 'automatism' of the Warhol aesthetic. Warhol's famous quote about switching on the camera and then walking away until he needed to change reels became (for certain writers and critics) a credo, against which any (additional) directorial decision-making (expressed first and foremost through use of the camera) was itself basically seen as reactionary and 'bad'. Morrissey passed into myth as the corrupter, later the string-puller and manipulator of the entire Factory operation by those who clung passionately to the earlier, 'purer' aesthetic.

It has been from this perspective, re-enforced by discomfort about Morrissey's genuinely conservative politics, that Morrissey's contribution has been judged, and the films bearing his imprint left out in the cold. To the most die-hard, the Warhol canon is now unassailably those films made prior to Morrissey's involvement. What muddies the whole attribution question further are the statements from the period of both Warhol and Morrissey, which so consciously minimised the director's role and so privileged the place of the actors. Indeed, the contributions of the performers are perhaps the most neglected contributions of all by the critics. Both filmmakers are explicit about not 'getting in the way' of the performers, of not wanting to lose the very qualities that led them to want these people in front of the camera in the first place.

None of the foregoing is in any way intended to knock Warhol at the expense of Morrissey. The whole Factory experiment, insofar as it pertained to film, was a remarkable one, and, I would argue, its progress from film to film both logical and inevitable

A recent estimate puts the Factory output at something like 4,000 films (currently being catalogued) (2). Even though many, if not most, are likely to be one and two

reelers, this is the most incredible output and suggests the camera never stopped turning. The Factory output of product begins to resemble that of the early D.W. Griffith in sheer volume.

A huge part of the interest of those films that have already been screened is the way in which they seem to take apart basic elements of the language of mainstream film. Gregory Battcock has described **EMPIRE** as an 8-hour establishing shot denying the rest of the narrative that one might expect to follow, and **BLOW JOB** as a reaction shot without its 'complement' shot, generating incredible tension through unrelenting duration. (3). **KISS** isolates and repeats with variations one of the commonly climactic moments of mainstream cinema, the 'clinch', but provides, thereby, climax after climax. The **SCREEN TESTS** likewise refer to, and isolate, a mainstream procedure of commercial cinema, but become not auditions for a film but films in their own right. It is in their dislocations, their being wrenched from the narrative structuring that renders them 'conventional', that they become especially interesting and begin to alter how we see mainstream cinema thereafter.

But these films were only the beginning, and the Factory output, insofar as we know it, has particular coherence as a personal re-working of the history of the cinema, made in the spirit of curiosity, in the tradition of Edison and Lumiere. The earliest Factory films I've seen remind me of nothing more than the first films made for the cinema, and follow the development of the cinema in their own evolving aesthetics: from static, single reel shots to moving shots, from silents to talkies; from black and white to colour; from the observational to the narrative, with ventures even into specific genres like the Western in **LONESOME COWBOYS**.

Above all, the (Dream) Factory was committed to the creation and fostering of stars, which meant the production of star 'vehicles', even when these were sometimes films that were no more than single close-ups. The star's close-up, after all, is one of the most privileging strategies of the commercial cinema, overriding if necessary any narrative motivation. Audiences wanted close-ups and stars were paid to provide them. Rather than contest the star power of actresses like Joan Crawford, who could demand extra close-ups no matter what the narrative demands of the movie (Nicholas Ray has described how Crawford insisted on extra close-ups once **JOHNNY GUITAR** was completed on the balance of the film seemed to be shifting in the

direction of Mercedes McCambridge), the Factory was at the service of its stars. But where Hollywood bathed its stars in filtered lights and enclosed them in ever more voluptuous and extravagant spectacles (Elizabeth Taylor's **CLEOPATRA** was released at around the time Warhol began his filmmaking), the Factory's 'stable' never left their street origins behind them. And that is a huge part of their appeal, the fact that they are recognisably of our world, not catapulted out of it, beyond human reach.

At a time when the major studios themselves were breaking up, the Factory was like a last ditch stand to produce a studio-identified product, which itself goes some way to further explaining the extent to which Warhol and Morrissey played down their role as directors. They were more Archie Mayo and Roy Del Ruth than Antonioni and Fellini, anonymous studio employees rather than auteurs. Morrissey himself has said that, in the years to come, our only memory of movies will be the stars.

At the same time, although self-consciously a studio, the Factory housed two directors who increasingly emerged as independents. Hollywood directors like Aldrich and Preminger were already having to operate as independents, to survive. It is interesting that George Cukor, just after working on the super-production of **MY FAIR LADY**, was so responsive to the Factory efforts (albeit for complex reasons) (4). Cukor was one of the directors who must have felt particularly cut adrift by the end of the studio era, his own output dramatically declining.

As a final gloss on the Factory aspect of his past work (and it should be remembered that Morrissey made many films before his association with Warhol), it is worth commenting that, at least from the contemporary interviews and commentaries from both Warhol and Morrissey, there does not seem to have been any kind of quarrel or acrimony between them. Warhol spoke of moving on to make 'entertainment', 'a movie' (5), and the progress both men made, individually and in their collaborations, is in a single direction: to increasing control of the medium, increasing recognition of the complexities inherent in such control. That this was achieved without cutting off from the roots that nourished their earliest efforts is a tribute to a certain integrity and seriousness of purpose. Neither went on to become, in any way, 'conventional' mainstream filmmakers, for all their love of Hollywood.

Panning the Camera in MY HUSTLER

The 'dispute' between Warhol and Morrissey seems to be fundamentally one invented by the critics. It has boiled down to an apocryphal story about the shooting of **MY HUSTLER** (6)

This 70 minute film is basically just two shots: the first shows a hustler on a beach gossiped about by a group on a veranda looking down at him; the second is a held static shot in a bathroom where the hustler is essentially seduced. Morrissey's 'take-over' of Warhol is boiled down to an account of the shooting of the first of these two shots. The story describes how the first take was shot one way by Warhol, then 'corrupted' by Morrissey's re-take, which is the version surviving in the film as it is now exhibited. Warhol held simply on the young hustler on the beach; presumably the game played the three would-be seducers was all off-screen. Morrissey panned the camera, showing both the group conniving on the veranda and the hustler on the beach, connecting them in continuous (i.e. not 'cut') space. The camera pans back and forth several times in some forty minutes, always staying with either the group or the hustler for long uncut duration.

If the account of this difference of shooting is basically correct, and given the decision (presumably a joint decision) to go with the pan in the final release version of the film, then we are basically looking at shifts from the kind of unbroken off-screen strategies of **BEAUTY NO.2** to something more complex, something that doesn't merely repeat the earlier film's experiment.

BEAUTY NO.2 is basically a one-shot film, with reel changes that are also time-breaks. Even at 70 minutes, it's a compelling piece of work, with Edie Sedgwick, centre-frame, pinned, from start to finish between the man on the bed beside her, the man bugging her off-screen and the camera itself.

At the same time, it's a taxing film, arguably a work of some cruelty. There is no camera shift or cutaway to aid the character of Edie Sedgwick. Her 'stripping bare' is part of what the film is waiting for, why the camera keeps running - as with Ondine in **THE CHELSEA GIRLS**, with the young hustler in the bathroom in **MY HUSTLER**, with Henry Geldzahler in the film called, simply, **HENRY GELDZAHLE**. The camera keeps going till they crack. In such situations, the more static the camera, the more the films suggest laboratory experiments (in **BEAUTY NO.2**

particularly, where the off-screen voice of Chuck Wein has the purpose of provoking Edie to react). There is also the feeling of the actors being forcibly stuck where they are placed, for the sake of a very rigid conceptual approach, which refuses any movement of the camera. They are relentless experiments, but, for all their humour and self-exposure, there is something chilling about their inner-propelled necessity to break through defences, to unmask, to bring down, to wait for this to happen.

MY HUSTLER is a move on from this. To have left the group on the veranda off-screen would have been merely to repeat the narrative strategy of the earlier film. The pan brings the group on-screen and dynamizes two dramatic spaces. With **CHELSEA GIRLS**, one of the genuinely great film experiments, not only does the camera react to what is happening by zooming and panning within certain sequences, but its reel-by-reel presentation on two screens simultaneously, in an arbitrary order, means that every projection of the film is potentially a unique event, the images on one screen altering our response to the images on the screen beside it. The overall effect is one of quite considerable complexity, even if the parts are somewhat weaker than the whole.

These films are just three or four out of this extraordinary output, but from films like **KISS, BLOW JOB** and **EMPIRE**, through **MY HUSTLER** and on to **CHELSEA GIRLS** is a very real development, entailing far greater control over the camera and moves towards notions of editing. It seems to me that film like **LONESOME COWBOYS** and, more significantly, **FLESH**, come as logical moves along a line that has been moving forward since the experiments began and that they represent real progress along that line.

The fact that Morrissey took increasingly seriously the role of director from around this time and that Warhol increasingly took a more background role till he retired from filmmaking altogether does suggest that Warhol had exhausted his own interest in the film medium (he could, after all, have continued making his own films parallel with Morrissey), and that Morrissey was becoming more engaged in the medium.

LONESOME COWBOYS

That Morrissey should have chosen a Western (albeit a Western like no other) as the vehicle for his departure

suggests a need for some kind of generic form, no matter how sabotaged, some kind of rough, pre-existing material to start from. This even meant renting a set already standing and built for another picture (all of the films of this period were made for next to nothing). As later, with the horror pictures, **FLESH FOR FRANKENSTEIN** and **BLOOD FOR DRACULA**, this meant certain givens, certain hooks, to improvise around. In the western the basics include a western main street, a sheriff and a gang, the town madam, horses, guns, cowboy outfits, and a staple narrative starting point: a bunch of strangers riding into town and causing trouble.

By ceding no ground to censorship, by apparently giving it no consideration, Morrissey unlocks many of the implicits in the western and the horror film genres. They are comedies, but they release previously buried elements. The buddy relationships of the western genre are here explicit homosexual relationships, but portrayed with considerable complexity and as much teasing as in a traditional western. There are moments in the film whose real content is not far off similar scenes in **RED RIVER**. Much is achieved by looks, cuts, bizarre spins of behaviour that push the implicits to the surface in a way that is new. One cowboy talks to another about his haircut, runs his hands through the other cowboy's hair, moving it this way and that, to see the effect. The scene ends with him using the bar used to tie up the horses as a ballet school bar, showing the other cowboy exercises that will help firm up his butt.

The film denies any sense of enclosure or complete illusion. Tourists visiting the western set wander by in the background in one shot. The film acknowledges its actual time and place throughout (1967, an Arizona film set filled with New Yorkers) but nonetheless achieves moments that are genuinely transporting because the actors are encouraged to play for the truth of any given situation and these seemingly as often touch on real dreams, memories and losses (real for both actors and the characters they are playing) as they hit moments that spiral into comedy.

FLESH-TRASH-HEAT

It is difficult, in a brief article, to convey anything like the full scope of these bewilderingly complex works. Each film deserves its own detailed commentary, but perhaps something of their overall coherence can be suggested here, which might lead us to a fuller sense of Morrissey as a filmmaker.

After **LONESOME COWBOYS**, **FLESH** represents a different - and more important - kind of breakthrough, reinforced by **TRASH** and rounded out by **HEAT**. All three films are innovatory in the exact subject-matter they bring to the screen, but just as importantly in the way the subject-matter is handled. Morrissey draws confidently on his roots in the earlier work with Warhol but now moves on to organise his material far more coherently and comprehensively. Something like a directorial point of view emerges.

If **FLESH**, **TRASH** and **HEAT** are only retrospectively any kind of 'trilogy', they do, nonetheless, grow out of one another and represent a kind of moral journey, one, surprisingly returned to, with more optimism, in the **FRANKENSTEIN** and **DRACULA** movies.

Taken together, they tell the story of Joe (Joe Dallesandro): hustler, junkie, movie actor. They are spiralling, almost cyclic journeys encompassing a wide range of encounters, most of them sexual, that 'take the temperature' of their respective milieus (the hustling world, the drug world, the movie world). There is an overall sense, thematic to so much of Morrissey's work, of characters trying to maintain dignity and hold to traditional values in a world of wrecked lives and contradictory viewpoints. Indeed it is this struggle to self-assert that makes the films both very American and very dynamic. No-one gives an inch, but each character has to negotiate his or her own way through. It adds up to a kind of 'human comedy' not far from Balzac's.

FLESH follows Joe through a day with his clients. After waking from his on-screen sleep, he dresses up in his hustling gear and hits the streets. The ostensible object is to raise \$200. The film alternates between scenes on the New York streets and the substance of his encounters.

TRASH picks up the same character a couple of years later, now a junkie. His new girlfriend is a transsexual, played by Holly Woodlawn, who physically resembles the mother of his child in **FLESH**, but is far more of a homemaker. Again, the film rounds out a day-in-the-life-of, from fix to fix, rather than from john to john. Sex is just one of the means of acquiring heroin, with the central irony that the priapic Joe of **FLESH** can no longer get it up because of all the junk running through his system.

In both films, trying to hold together a home and a relationship adds enormous poignancy to the ceaseless rounds of encounters. The second film has added pull because the bright-eyed life in Joe in **FLESH** has all but gone

out in **TRASH**. The eyes if not dead are dimming and his semi-catatonic state pushes the role of Holly to the centre, displacing Joe. Holly tries to keep both herself and Joe going, is herself a ceaseless cycle of activity, rummaging trash to pull a home together in a dank New York basement. There is an unexpected moment where Holly comes home to find Joe sweeping; she beams with pride at what she has achieved in pulling a few sticks of furniture together and finding herself a loving husband.

At the same time, these characters are struggling against the odds. It's all they can do to keep head above water. They aren't actually going anywhere, but the films celebrate the ingenuity of their efforts to keep standing up, in the face both of bureaucracies and a general sexual free-for-all. Nothing makes Holly more mad than the prevarications of the by-the-rule-book welfare officer on the one hand and the opportunistic 'anything goes' sexual liberalism of her sister on the other. Holly has standards and though she frequently falls from grace herself, she keeps coming back to them as the only bolster against a completely chaotic life.

If **FLESH** and **TRASH** are direct reactions to the contemporary scene in late sixties New York, street movies made by people who knew what they were talking about, then **HEAT** welds together that same tough preoccupation with contemporary mores to Morrissey's underlying interest in genre pieces. For this is **SUNSET BOULEVARD** revisited in the seventies, an old movie classic invaded by New Yorkers from the earlier films, still looking for kicks, for success, a little love and an easy life. Joe has now become an expert in deceit, a manipulator, a love-you-and-leave-you bit player who learned his trade on 42nd Street, progenitor of the new greed that will characterise the eighties. All Joe wants is success.

He ends up where he starts at the beginning of the film, at the motel pool, an arena where everyone is waiting for something to happen. Unsuccessful in revising his flagging career, he dives into the pool in the final images. It's as if all he can do is enjoy the sun while he can.

The three films together chart a descent. Though already a sharp operator at twenty in **FLESH**, a kid who has had a rounded education from his hustling contacts, already an actor, who can charm notes out of a tight wallet by playing up to people's fantasies, he still has a fresh and instinctive reaction to a world that still holds surprises. By **HEAT**, via **TRASH**, he is on his way to being jaded, unresponsive, uninstinctive, poisoned at the well, dead.

It's a surprise, later, to see him positively vigorous again in the horror movies. It's as if, after hanging around the Hollywood of **HEAT**, he finally got himself an Errol Flynn role in **FRANKENSTEIN** (literally bounding up staircases and swinging on chandeliers) and was reinvigorated, no longer a willing part of the decay but the mythic American action man taking on the bad guys, first Baron Frankenstein, then Count Dracula (and then a career in European art movies)

That all three films in this 'trilogy' are comedies is a tribute to Morrissey's ultimate respect for his players. Cyclic though the structure of the films may be, they are invigorated by the people in front of the camera. There is no sense of an imprisoning and overwhelming directorial view of the world, rather a patient listening to a world that doesn't stop revealing itself.

Camera and Actors

Unlike **BEAUTY NUMBER 2**, Morrissey's movies meet his players half way. His camera is in there, moving about his players, looking for reactions, leaving no-one out (or permanently off-screen). He also, by getting involved in his material, in the situations, meets his audience half-way. Sequences may be long, but they move.

Morrissey, along with Rossellini and Altman, is one of the masters of the zoom. The attitude behind his camera is an inclusive one; the world isn't broken up into selected and isolated fragments so much as moved in on and out of, scanned and searched. Hunched in a corner somewhere, Morrissey pans and zooms and tries to get to grips with the situation being acted out in front of him, a situation he and his players between them have chosen to dramatise.

Under Morrissey's increasingly assumed role of director, the camera moves become less arbitrary, more exploratory, more attuned to what is actually happening on screen, in sympathy, listening to everybody. In short, the films become a good deal more humanist, which is perhaps why some critics have compared Morrissey's work to Renoir's. There is a definite development, for example, between **MY HUSTLER** and **FLESH**, made three years later. **MY HUSTLER** as already mentioned, is essentially two shots, the first setting up tension between three voyeurs and the (human) object of their attention. **FLESH** is made up of not two block scenes but perhaps twenty. As well as utilizing a more complex time frame (a working day), and

moving with Joe Dallesandro between a number of locations, each with their own characters, the films explores Joe in different guises and personalities. The camera moves in to isolate reaction shots, to interpret the scene in front of the lens, to understand. Joe watching, listening, taking things in, is a recurring shot in the films (continued in the horror movies). And this directorial approach is continued in **TRASH**. By the time of **HEAT**, many of the rough edges have been knocked off the technique and a known professional actress, Sylvia Miles, is involved, but wholly integrated into the acting style of the film.

Through these three films, the content becomes increasingly privileged over the technique and moral problems rather than technical problems are foregrounded. This, too, seems to parallel the history of the cinema. Though Morrissey has always used and explored technique, the actual subject-matter and the characterisations have become more his preoccupation and the films have a growing maturity as a result of that. By **HEAT**, Morrissey seems in complete control of his medium, though never in over-control of his material. **MIXED BLOOD** enlarges the canvas to encompass whole street gangs, the camera tuck amongst them. But between that film and another gang movie, **SPIKE OF BENSONHURST**, Morrissey is capable of a film that recalls Visconti, **BEETHOVEN'S NEPHEW**. It's as if Europe puts him in a different frame of mind, as if he can find elegance amongst the ruins, an elegance he never finds in American culture.

The key to Morrissey's films is ultimately not so much the camera as his players. Taking the films all together, they contain an extraordinary gallery of characters, as rich as Dickens. Joe Dallesandro is some kind of lynch-pin to the films of his 'middle' period, but all around him, and, in the later films, independent of him, are characters ship-wrecked and broken but still struggling to keep up on top. Characters who need regular sexual and heroin fixes, money and some sense of belonging somewhere.

Morrissey has talked about characters changing, spinning round, surprising themselves and us (7). He very often uses improvisation as his means for expressing this. When he works from a written script, he sometimes writes the scenes daily rather than as a whole before starting the project, to keep the whole enterprise on its toes, to keep it fresh.

Unlike many other directors who generally use improvisation as a means to achieving a livelier written end, Morrissey is unapologetic about using improvisation as an

end in itself. Warhol's films were almost all improvised, but in Morrissey's films, the improvisations are more controlled, channelled, directed. The one improvised scene is not the whole film, but a part of something larger and broader, one improvisation running against another. There is no longer any sense of a director waiting for people in front of the camera to break; there is a much greater sense of collaboration, of the films aiding the players.

When Morrissey watched George Cukor shooting **RICH AND FAMOUS**, he observed that Cukor got his most interesting results by shooting between takes, letting the camera run on after calling 'cut' (8). Antonioni has said similar things...that keeping the camera going after the take has been 'completed' exposes the slippage, the 'truth', between performance and actor.

Morrissey has greatly complicated our sense of acting and performance. Some critics have dismissed his efforts by claiming that the performers are just being themselves in front of the camera, but that implies there is a self that is free of performance, which Morrissey's films patently deny. What fascinates him is the confusion between performance in life and performance in a role, the slipping in and out of character. From this perspective, the notion of 'authenticity' becomes a nonsense, since there is no such thing. Joe the Stud is itself a performance, every bit as much as Holly Woodlawn. The English actress Maxime McKendry as the Marquise Di Fiori in **BLOOD FOR DRACULA** builds a performance out of Home Counties priorities and emphases. Joe brings American directness. Udo Kier is allowed his head in both **FRANKENSTEIN** and **DRACULA**... a kind of acting madness. Arno Juerging as Dracula's Germanic assistant and Polanski as the peasant are allowed to ham it to the hilt. The girls in the same film are full-blooded Italian.

It is out of this confusion, these collisions, as in **HEAT**, that Morrissey provides the stage for such interesting films about performance. No overall concept neutralises the performances, they all bristle and jostle and the audience has to deal with the variety and contradiction of the world.

In the later films, Morrissey moves on more to groups and gangs. In **MIXED BLOOD**, the gang members seem to be playing out the roles of gang members rather than living them out from inner conviction. It gives the film, in an interesting way, a curiously 'superficial' feel. The shoot-outs are a game, but a deadly one, resulting in piles of bodies.

At the end of the day, there is a sense that no one in Morrissey's films is really going anywhere. Characters in no way gain from self-knowledge. They do not reflect but endlessly act. Reflection is driven out by self-assertive conversation, perpetual talk. In **TRASH**, Jane Forth drives her husband mad because she won't stop talking about junk she's read, recipes, her old high school. The soundtracks of Morrissey's films are positively buzzing with talk. The overall effect is of a human hive.

If there is any kind of still centre it is Joe Dallesandro's character, who remains throughout the films something of a mystery, pointedly not talking in many sequences, but absorbing the hubbub around him.

The films satirize characters' pretensions, but without cynicism. The shots always hold too long for that, refusing to go for the quick and pointed cut. Assertions are made but the camera holds on the fumbles, the groping for the next line. This will sound like amateurism, but Morrissey chooses his actors carefully; each film creates a completely convincing universe, working in all contingencies, errors, stumbles, exaggerated performances. The effect is one of generosity to his characters, indulgence of their foibles.

It is illustrative to compare Schlesinger's **MIDNIGHT COWBOY** with **FLESH**. Even at the time of its release, Schlesinger's film seemed a modish, cynical piece of work, made from the outside looking in. Only Voigt's iconic status keeps the film's mawkishness to some degree at bay. The sexual encounters are all 'spoiled', the homosexuality treated violently, crazily, the relationship with Hoffman sentimentalized. Compare Joe's homosexual encounters in **FLESH** where you have the hustler himself as generous, affectionate, interested in his clients. The punters are not put down, are not jokes, not self-hating, but quite content with what they can get. It is the opposite of similar encounters in **MIDNIGHT COWBOY**.

Morrissey takes characters on their own terms, can appreciate small gestures like Holly's pride in her home... the squalid room in **TRASH** is softened by the meaning it has for her. Compare the relish with which Schlesinger depicts Joe Buck's and Ratso's apartment, close-ups of burned-out pans and all. One can't help feeling this is Schlesinger's idea of hell on earth, that it is inconceivable that anyone could seriously think of such a place as 'home'.

Also illustrative is Schlesinger's treatment of Sylvia Miles's character in **MIDNIGHT COWBOY**. It's a walk-on role. She is a joke from her first appearance, and rapidly

stripped of any dignity. The bedroom scene with Voigt has to become a rolling around on the TV channel changer so that Schlesinger can jam in more and more images that conjure up his cynicism about America. He is so preoccupied with cutting in these asides that he misses the scene in front of the camera.

By contrast, in **HEAT**, Sylvia Miles is accorded a certain stature. There is no less comedy in the social pretensions of her situation (there is a whole lot more), but there is also pathos. It comes from acknowledgement of the very human effort to cope with change, ageing, keeping the lid on her own desires, maintaining status in a town preoccupied with climbing up and falling down ladders.

There is an accommodating generosity to Morrissey's overall approach; he lets his characters keep their illusions; to the characters played by Holly Woodlawn and Sylvia Miles (and Joe), they are seen as vital to survival. Schlesinger rather strips his characters of their illusions. He has a scene where Joe Buck literally dumps his hustling gear in the trashcan and donning instead clothes which give him a nice 'boy-next-door' appearance, exchanging an illusion for Hollywood's idea of 'real life'. There is no recognition that it might just be another fiction.

Both Warhol and Morrissey talked of making films with those rejected by others. The extras in **MIDNIGHT COWBOY** became the stars of Morrissey's films. Warhol's and Morrissey's achievement, Morrissey taking it much further, was virtually to create a sub-cinema, a sub-Hollywood, based not in manufacturing illusions but in acknowledging those illusions by which people live, giving them space and time on the screen. It is this sense of genuine performance and conviction that the people in the films know the worlds they are depicting, that makes the films so convincing even today. If anything this sense of reality is even more heightened in an era in which films are so over-determined for the mass-market, often indistinguishable from the public relations massaging of advertising. Morrissey's films of this period seem a record of lives lived at that time and are perhaps his equivalent of Warhol's 'time capsules'.

Cinecittà and beyond

I have to confess that I've seen neither **WOMEN IN REVOLT** nor **L'AMOUR**, made before and after **HEAT** respectively. But it's clear that by the time Morrissey went to Italy, after having made these films, he had an altogether

stronger assurance in the handling of his material, an assurance, as I've suggested, that is already evident in **HEAT**.

FLESH FOR FRANKENSTEIN and **BLOOD FOR DRACULA** were made back-to-back in 1973. According to Morrissey, **FRANKENSTEIN** was completed in a morning and **DRACULA** begun that same afternoon. Though they have much in common, **DRACULA** seems to me much the more mature film, freer with its raw material, wider spread in its sympathies.

Even more so than **LONESOME COWBOYS** and **HEAT**, the **Frankenstein** and **Dracula** stories, as horror classics, start with certain givens. With **Frankenstein**, you must have the gloomy castle on the hill, the laboratory in the basement, with its bubbling phials and tanks of body-parts preserved in spirits. You must have the Baron himself and you must have the Monster. And if there is to be any dramatic dynamic, there must be a hero in opposition to the ghastly experiments going on behind those walls.

Morrissey plays with the conventions (and with the 3-D effects at his disposal), pushing all characters and actions to extremes. But certain emphases take the film in new directions. Most blatantly, he emphasizes the sex drives of his characters, which motor everyone, even the hero (played by Dallesandro).

Like the characters in **HEAT**, Baron **Frankenstein** and his sister, **Katrin** strive to maintain form and decorum against positively raging desires. Unlike **HEAT**, where these masks and poses are contingent necessities, here they are hypocrisies, feudal European exercises in control. **Katrin**, in particular, insists on her class superiority over **Joe**; withering and sex-starved European set against healthy All-American. Even getting **Joe** into bed with her is an assertion of mistress against servant.

Several times, **Joe** and his class are dismissed as 'trash' by **Frankenstein** and his sister. Class overrides everything. After **Katrin** discovers that **Joe** has been wandering around the castle into her brother's laboratory, she stiffens up with the assertion that he is a 'scholar', as if that were sufficient to cover all iniquities.

Joe's class and sexuality is insisted upon in the film, and in a story so centralized around the theme of the body, **Joe's** nudity, celebrated by the film, is set against the patched up bodies of the monsters in **Frankenstein's** lab itself. The whole film can be explored along the lines and variations of this opposition, with the shots of **Joe's** writhing nudity as he makes instinctive love a kind of corrective to all other

"Oh I'm sure they're religious, they have a very nice house!" - Dracula meets the De Fioncs



business in the film. As a metaphor for Euro-American relations, it is striking, and is axial also to the Dracula movie.

The Frankensteins resemble the middle class couple in **TRASH**, who want to see Joe shoot up. Preparing to try sex with Frankenstein's male monster, his sister says "I'm ready for a new experience". The Frankenstein's are just another jaded couple, living beyond laws and playing with the chemistry of life to find new kicks and confirm the dominance of their class and race. The Nazi parallels are explicit.

FLESH FOR FRANKENSTEIN, ultimately, is a good-and-evil film, with Joe as dashing hero ultimately able to achieve little effect. Though the result of his attempts to release the monster is a literal pile of bodies, the closing shots show him bound and suspended by a rope above the stench, the Frankenstein children about to work the monstrous cycle all over again.

BLOOD FOR DRACULA seems to me a much more complex film, throwing off the easy Good and Evil demar-

cations. Here, following Renoir's dictum, 'everyone has their reasons', even Count Dracula himself. The film elaborates and cross-works three intricate plots.

The Count Dracula story sets the narrative wheel turning, as, dying for the lack of virgin's blood, he traverses Europe to Italy in the hope of finding uncorrupted daughters to satisfy his thirst and his hunger. Setting off with his manservant, in a car carrying his coffin on its roof, he has word put about that he is a wealthy Middle European aristocrat looking for a virgin bride as a way to trick himself into the houses that might slake his thirst.

This sets up the second narrative in Italy, where an aristocratic family ruined by gambling debts sees an opportunity to revive its fortunes by marrying into wealth. The household is presided over by a home-counties matron worn down by the shabbiness of a once-beautiful palatial home, and her husband, the Marquis, an ineffectual aristocrat with a gift for poetry to which no-one listens, rather touchingly played by Vittorio De Sica. Their four daughters become the primary objects of Dracula's quest, and each must pass themselves off as virgins to secure the fortune they believe Dracula to possess.

Undermining the whole enterprise is Joe, again the servant, who is himself working his way through the sisters with revolutionary fervour. Unable to be a master of property, he plays the master in bed, dreaming of a day when socialism will drag down all feudal privilege in a more permanent and substantial way. In one episode he literally beats Dracula to the virgin, leaving the Count to lap up the hymeneal blood left on the floor after his rape.

These three narratives turn together and intersect with some complexity (and comedy). More forcefully and explicitly than in **FRANKENSTEIN**, property rights and lineage take first place over sexual appetite. Joe is given marching orders by the daughters, who, having had him, now want to give him up for a life of "parties...society...shopping...beautiful clothes".

Udo Kier and Joe are once more opposed. Dracula's perverse desires set against Joe's healthy sexual appetite. As Dracula comes near to gaining ascendancy, the film darkens and depends on Joe's actions to restore some kind of order, even if, momentarily, it is the old order. There is a striking moment when Joe watches Dracula collapse from weakness on the staircase. Offering no help, he watches the Count painfully and slowly get back onto his feet again and shuffle on. What sets the film above **FLESH FOR**

FRANKENSTEIN is the degree of sympathy with which it presents all strategies. One almost shares Dracula's despair that there are no virgins left in Europe, particularly in those scenes where he retches violently after drinking the tainted blood of the daughters who have lied to him to get a hold of his money. The Marquis' family, like Dracula himself, are withering away and relying on stratagems to save themselves from the oblivion Joe Dallesandro dreams of. In De Sica's ineffectual Marquis is an affecting image of crumbling nobility and poetry, his own ruin his subjection to the gambling instinct. Dallesandro himself, like Kirk Douglas's Spartacus, is the all-American action man, posing as worker, dreaming of a socialist freedom, hammer and sickle painted on the wall above his bed. Sent up though his position may be, the world around him suggests the need of change, even of revolution.

The story dictates a preordained end, which Joe goes about with no-nonsense American practical know-how ("I'm going to get an axe"). But whereas Frankenstein seems to meet his just desserts, Dracula's death, his 'crime' being merely his innate addiction, renders him almost tragic.

These are curious films, obsessively attracted and repelled by Old World Europeanism, but ultimately throwing their weight with Joe and his heroics. In his subsequent work, this focus is split between an even more obsessive European story, **BEETHOVEN'S NEPHEW**, which has the visual sweep of a Visconti film, and the street gang movies made back in America: **MADAME WANG'S**, **FORTY-DEUCE**, **MIXED BLOOD**, and **SPIKE OF BENSONHURST**.

Between Old World European ossification and collapse and New Age American Night-mare, perhaps what Morrissey values most, by their very omission, and which he is emphatic about in all interviews, are bourgeois family codes, to pin the world back together, without which, he clearly believes, and observes, it is literally falling apart. It is in the efforts certain characters make towards pulling these codes together that, though satirized along with every other attempt to exert control over their lives, they approach their most genuine dignity in his films. As Yacowar writes in his book, these same characters are undermined endlessly by being slaves to (particularly sexual) appetite, which makes Morrissey's world-view ultimately tragi-comic.

The fact that he hasn't made a film since **SPIKE OF BENSONHURST** in 1988 is our loss; if anyone could grasp the temper of the times now, and cast some perspective on it, I think it might be Morrissey. Let's hope.



▲ DESERTER AND THE NOMADS

▼ AN AMBIGUOUS REPORT ABOUT THE END OF THE WORLD



Foolishness as a drug for life: Juraj Jakubisko, Slovak Surrealism and the New Wave

by *Daniel Bird*

The Velvet Revolution left behind two battered republics. Soon after, western spectators could momentarily see two symbiotic cultures before returning to ill founded preconceptions of a country tainted by decades of bland socialist conformity.

First and foremost, Juraj Jakubisko is a Slovak filmmaker (born in Kojšov, 30 April 1938). The role of Slovak filmmakers in the Czechoslovak New Wave of the sixties should not be underestimated. Juraj Jakubisko's work is idiosyncratic; at first his links with the Czechoslovak new wave seem purely to consist of generation and nationality. But looking beyond Jakubisko's primary interest in Slovak peasant art reveals links with Vera Chytilova, Jarmil Jires and with Czech surrealism. He has been compared to Brazil's Glauber Rocha, America's Robert Downey, Mexico's Alejandro Jodorowsky, Yuri Ilyenko of the Ukraine, Sergei Paradjanov of Armenia, Miklos Jancso of Hungary, and Poland's Stanislaw Kutz. Antonin Liehm argues that they share a world in which the basic colour is blood red, the dominant sign is that of death, the main diversion is violence, in which heroes dance a merry jig of revolution and war, only to add their heads to the others that have fallen.

Czechoslovakia cultivated a rich history of avant-garde theory and practice, first in the form of the Poetism movement, the avant-garde Devetsil group, finally the formation of the Prague surrealist group. This was facilitated by an autonomous system of state subsidised film production. Czech cinema was envisaged as part of an Eastern European cultural renaissance, inextricably linked to the post war thaw which began with Khrushchev's 1956 secret speech denouncing the crimes of Stalin and ended with the Warsaw pact's invasion of Dubek's Czechoslovakia in August 1968. I'd argue that Czech surrealism (its aesthetics sober compared to French surrealism) was a major influ-

ence upon the Czech New Wave. Jakubisko's early films were often French/Italian co-productions. COMO films not only produced Robbe-Grillet's **THE MAN WHO LIES**, but also the film that became the yard-stick for the Czechoslovak new wave: **THE SUN AND THE NET**, by another Slovak film maker Stefan Uher.

THE SUN AND THE NET relies on a fantasy structure as a device to introduce introspection. The film opens on the roof of a tall building in Bratislava. A boy takes photographs of a girl; they are swamped by thick haze, pierced by a multitude of protruding television aerials. The walls, even the windows of the boy's flat, are covered with Bellmeresque images of the hands of young girls, the wrinkled hands of old men (arranged in a manner reminiscent of the wall covered with butterflies in Seijun Suzuki's **BRANDED TO KILL**). After a bizarre childish game involving dustbins, the boy's younger brother runs indoors and sits with his brother and mother at a dark table. The mother contemplates her blindness. The young boy places a shard of glass into the flame and it is soon covered with soot. He squints at his mother through the glass, whilst she continually reciprocates the curiosity, effectively looking around the room through her son's eyes.

Such random vignettes of memory and contemplation of life, at no point sentimental, form the material from which the film is cut. The script was rejected on the grounds of its subversive dramatic structure. Uher avoided any overt political message, and even if there is one, it is subverted by the surreal lyricism of Stanislav Szomolanyi's camerawork, which became a visual bench mark for black and white Czechoslovak cinematography over the next eight years or so. **SUNSHINE AND THE NET** would never have been made without a sympathetic production company. Albert Marencin was primarily a writer who also produced screenplays and translated Jarry, Breton and Apollinaire into

Slovak. Significantly, Marencin established contact with the Czech Surrealists in the 1960s. However, such subversive activities may have contributed to his dismissal from his post after the Soviet invasion.

The Czech and Slovak schools of Surrealism

Albert Marencin's productions integrated the influence of both Czech and Slovak Surrealism. Although Jakubisko openly admits to drawing inspiration from Slovak surrealism, many of his collaborators had been influenced by Czech surrealism and therefore the backgrounds of both movements need to be outlined before discussing Jakubisko's work. The most concise accounts are detailed in Peter Hames's book *Dark Alchemy: the Films of Jan Svankmajer*.

Svankmajer points out that if French Surrealism was rooted in Dadaism, Czech Surrealism had roots in the Poetism of Karel Tiege. Tiege first came to prominence when his writings on cinema were placed alongside those of Delluc and Epstein in a volume under the banner of *Život II (Life II)* published in 1922 by the Devetsil group, the seed of the Czech avant-garde. Devetsil, named after a wild flower (the butterbur) has a literal meaning of nine strengths, which relate to nine arts. A split in the group resulted in Tiege presenting a separate manifesto under the Poetism banner. Tiege wrote that for six days man will be rational, but on the seventh he would rest from reason, thus favouring the fantastic and absurd.

The second Manifesto of Poetism (1927-28) forged links with psychoanalysis. Svankmajer says that it was because the second manifesto of Poetism was so similar to the second Surrealist manifesto that Tiege and the poet Vratislav Nezval (author of *Valerie and Her Week Of Wonders*) joined the international surrealist movement. Thus the Prague Surrealist movement was established in 1934. Though suppressed by the Nazi occupation it re-emerged in 1968, led by the theorist and writer Vratislav Effenberger, who dramatically altered the course of Jan Svankmajer's career when the latter joined the group in 1970.

Slovak Surrealism or nad realism (super realism), despite being particularly influenced by Poetism and Nezval, had developed separately from the Czech movement. Paradoxically, it had its greatest impact during the clerico-Fascist state of the 1940s. Whilst Surrealism had become the most important avant-garde movement in the Czech lands during the 1930s, Peter Petro argues that in

Slovakia it was the most important literary and cultural movement of the century. Surrealism was: "turned into a thoroughly domesticated, genuinely Slovak, literary and artistic phenomenon. At the heart of the movement at the time of its appearance was a challenge to the establishment, both literary and political. It was an act of rebellion, paralleling in many significant ways the similarly powerful nineteenth century Romantic movement."

With the exception of Uher's adaption of Dominik Tatarka's novel, **THE MIRACULOUS VIRGIN**, none of the New Wave films made in Slovakia had a direct link with Slovak Surrealism, but then neither did the Czech New Wave have a direct link with the Prague surrealist group. Svankmajer, although an admirer of Forman's **A BLONDE IN LOVE**, stayed quite distant from the New Wave and only joined Effenberger's group after his suppression following **LEONARDO'S DIARY**. But the Marencin-Bakos group continued to produce the most innovative work of the Slovak New Wave, climaxing, perhaps, with Jakubisko's films. Jakubisko collaborated with Jaromil Jires and Vera Chytilova at FAMU, on **HALL OF THE LOST SOULS** and **CEILING** respectively. During his collaboration with Jires, Jakubisko said: "we wrote the script together, and it seems in retrospect that it was a fateful encounter, his and mine, an encounter with experimentation. We got our kicks from the combination of colour and black and white."

Whilst acknowledging the richness of Czech culture, Jakubisko owes as much to the directions of his FAMU tutor Vaclav Wasserman as his encounter with either Jires or Chytilova, who encouraged Jakubisko to draw on the traditions of his Eastern Slovakian home. "I got the reputation of being an experimenter. All the professors said I was - Wasserman always backed me on whatever I thought up, he was convinced that I was being honest. That was all that mattered to him. And it is very fundamental in art".

When Jakubisko showed his second film **ZBEHOVIA A PUTNICI/DESERTER AND THE NOMADS** out of competition at Cannes in 1969 it was considered to be the most interesting film of the festival. The film is composed of three parts - the first was shown separately as **THE DESERTER** in 1967. The first two sections are set at the time of World War 1 and 2 respectively, the third after the apocalypse. Apparently inspired by the cruelty of peasant art, Jakubisko uses intense colours, alarming close-ups and exaggerated camera angles as a means to convey his concerns. The film not only unfolds in chronological order,

but has a stylistic logic, folkloric in nature, melding the realistic to the fantastic.

The first part, **THE DESERTER**, is based on a novel by Ladislav Tazky, though this seems to act purely as a pretext for chaotic improvisation, and punctuations of poetic imagery. The film opens on the aftermath of a battle during the First World War. The camera crawls over the blood-spattered bodies lying behind a hill. The two protagonists are introduced :Kalman, a gypsy and Martin; both are deserters. The film documents their doomed attempt to escape from the Austrian soldiers. Jakubisko regards the violence in his film as poetic, a combination unique to folk poetry. Jakubisko describes the cruelty of **THE DESERTER** as: *"no longer realistic cruelty, but an exaggeration of cruelty that is almost beautiful. People where I come from are accustomed to blood: there is nothing odd about it ; they do all their slaughtering and butchering themselves."*

Jakubisko believes that film poetics are the result of mixing naturalistic and poetic elements. The resulting absurd effect shows Jakubisko's Slovak Surrealist influence, an example being when Kalman discovers his hand covered with blood, which he is unable to wash off with water. Kalman then places his hand into a fire, burning it badly, and a young girl looks after him. He meets his wife Lila when he encounters a gypsy band on their way to a wedding. Soon we see her caressing her breasts through a heavy yellow filter. At the wedding feast Lila is approached by Death. Kalman, now disguised as a gypsy woman, takes off his disguise and chases Death off. The couple find time to make love just one last time before Kalman's inevitable death. Austro-Hungarians kick over a man with a peg-leg who claims he is Christ. The soldiers are shown raping Slovak women inter-cut with Kalman and Lila, implying the obvious.

Martin's demise is equally bizarre. The soldiers burst into an inn searching for him, and one of them gets locked in the toilet before they are all killed in a particularly bloody manner. The scene ends with one of the film's many scenes of people vomiting blood at the camera, before pulling back rapidly down a long table to reveal this blood spattered all over a painting of a nude at the other end. Children kick babies off chamber pots. A child is killed when a gun goes off accidentally and one of the land-owners is stabbed in the back: he crawls the length of the wedding table and squirms upon his back to reveal a red apple stuffed in his mouth like a pig. Another land-owner hides in an oven; the soldiers

allow him to cook before he eventually struggles out. He and his wife are made to moo like cows. The bodies of Martin and Kalman are laid out on a bed, side by side, on public display. The peasants dance around the bed, Martin falls between Kalmans legs. **THE DESERTER** ends with a peasant carrying Death's scythe. The peasant asks Death what he is looking for; Death replies happiness. The peasant with good reason starts to laugh.

Jakubisko, uses a script as a set of directions for getting things started, since without a complete script you are forced to keep your eyes open to see what you might steal and where. A more spontaneous method of work emerges. This approach to filming was particularly evident in the second episode of **DESERTER AND THE NOMADS, DOMINIKA**. Jakubisko states: *"I was supposed to do some shots of some geese in a courtyard; and when everything was ready and we opened up the gates and a gaggle of geese was supposed to wander into the courtyard, a tank rumbled in instead. And so I got it all down on film. I took a long time to decide whether or not to leave it that way."* **DOMINIKA**, was a response to the Russian liberation of Slovakia during World War 2: *"The film is about the process, the mechanism, of killing, about how easily people learn to kill, just because, say, somebody has a different uniform on. In the end they aren't even aware of it."*

This second part concerns a Soviet army unit which takes over a farmhouse. They eat all of the family's food and get very drunk, so much so that when one of the soldiers chases the older daughter into the hayloft he is unable to climb the ladder. An egg seller is presumed to be a spy because he has a German coat. The soldiers force the egg seller to dig his own grave, and as if this is not sadistic enough, the soldier delegated to do the shooting turns the other way and kills a clutch of rabbits. The drunken captain topples into the grave by mistake. The egg seller makes off with the dead rabbits and is finally shot. The Russians assemble for a picture posing over the corpse of the egg seller.

Meanwhile, the next door neighbour is busy digging up the corpse of his son, none other than Death himself. Suddenly the surprise arrival of German soldiers leads to the total massacre of everybody, including a flock of geese which get caught in the cross fire. The aftermath looks like the result of an extremely bloody pillow fight. The **DOMINIKA** story ends with a Russian soldier surviving the bloodbath but stepping onto a rake, which consequently smashes his skull, killing him. Death, tells the only survivor

of the massacre, a kitten, to die, and it obliges by falling dead on its back. The film ends with a poignant not to mention potent sequence of images: a sepia shot of opening flowers, Kalman on the lap of a blonde girl, blood streaming between her legs, a German with a saxophone, and the dead body of a naked boy and a swan.

*"I decided to film two other stories to go with **THE DESERTER** because I wanted to show that sweat and blood don't mean anything yet, that it is far more cruel when all that is left in the end is a pile of green dust. The last story, **NOMADS**, is at the same time a fairy tale about God. Man invented God and his laws in order to be able to break them. Mankind has come so far that if God truly existed (and the end of the world and the last judgement) it wouldn't interest men at all. They would continue to commit murder in the name of some doctrine."*

NOMADS is set after the Apocalypse. Two obese ladies push trolleys down the endless corridors of an underground bomb shelter. The scene is shot in monochrome and green. The grotesque women mock an old man who claims that he is Death. A dying man vomits at the camera; first it looks like pus, but soon turns to a blood red. Finally a girl accompanying Death emerges from the tunnel. However, the earth is barren and the colour of ash and people are reduced to piles of green dust. Death dons a Nazi uniform and chases the girl across the radioactive wasteland to an amusing Russian theme. The odd couple soon realise that they cannot drink the radioactive water. Death successfully prays for rain. The girl strips off and walks through the forest. Death and the girl visit a windmill looking for Man. Death thinks he has found a human being, but it is in fact a wig on a wooden mannequin. Death then puts the wig on his head and dances to a gramophone.

The girl feels that she is about to die, and sits with Death upon a bed, in a shot referring directly to the dead bodies of Martin and Kalman in the first episode. Death and the girl invent an imaginary Eden, where she makes her face up like a clown and Death plays a violin. She claims that she is Eve and that Death is Adam and Death no longer exists. The film ends with a plague of bats that suddenly covers everything, including the gramophone. Death asks God. "You instructed me to kill Man, did you know how much he would help me?" Naked children dance around the girl, throwing white feathers as she walks with a machine gun in her hand. The girl crawls into a haystack, and a lascivious old peasant pulls up her skirt. Death, now with a beard, finds her dead in the haystack. Death asks a little girl with a

pipe, "Is this the end? Is this Eden?" Instead of answering Death's question, she reveals her black stockings and suspenders. In yet another of those post-atomic nutcase endings favoured by Eastern European directors, Death is shot by an aircraft, flames flaring from his back. "One day, God, Man will kill you", he shouts as the bomb falls. All that remains is a crater and a suit case.

The subsequent political changes in the Czech and Slovak Republics result in the film now seeming perhaps more excessive and oddly surreal than I suspect Jakubisko ever intended. But that doesn't mean that a film like **DESERTER AND THE NOMADS** can be dismissed as being too specific to a particular time and culture. The beauty of the visual poetics subvert any specific meanings. When the suppressed film makers of the New Wave re-emerged during the seventies, they were required to give an account for their behaviour during the sixties, like naughty school children, a description which I am sure Jakubisko and Chytilova would approve of. Jakubisko denounced his films as well as his critics at the 1983 Venice Film Festival, when his most famous film, **THE MILLENNIAL BEE**, was awarded the Golden Phoenix.

His last film of the sixties was **BIRDS, ORPHANS AND FOOLS**, made in 1968. Jakubisko said of this film: *"The story itself is very simple: two boys and a girl. But there is a sort of second plane - if I were to exaggerate I'd call it a philosophical plane - expressed in statements that are constantly in conflict with the behaviour of the characters and are constantly being discredited by their behaviour... my three heroes are orphans because their parents are murdered by each other, the girl Jewish, her folks murdered by the Nazis. The Communists were responsible for the deaths of the parents of one of the boys, and the Jews had killed the other boys parents... the product of the absurdity of our world."* This story of a boy found in an institution for mentally defective children, who envies their happiness and ignorance and plays the part of the fool to reject the cruelty of the adult world, was denied distribution. The same fate befell Jakubisko's subsequent film **SEE YOU IN HELL, FELLOWS!**

SEE YOU IN HELL, FELLOWS! begins with the shot of a bell ringing in stop frame. The bell turns out to be part of an ark, confirmed by the prophesy of an imminent deluge, relayed on loud speaker. Rita, after the funeral of her daughter, the Goose Girl, returns to her home in an car packed with her family. The driver cries the titular statement before steering the car off the track of a snowy



mountainside. The passengers seem to be killed, and only one survivor crawls away from the wreckage before addressing the camera directly about this being a film of his life. He then remembers - and we see - the events prior to the death of his Goose Girl. This child is brought up in life to be crucified by her family, so that God might forgive them for their sins, as advised by two witches. Rita has many visions; one concerns the witches killing the Goose Girl with an axe. Once she is crucified, the group blame her death on each other, before sacrificing farm animals to God. The Goose Girl seems to return to life, and the film ends in the farcical pursuit of Rita and her family by a truck full of soldiers, drop kicking grenades at each other.

Lenin once declared that film was the most important art. It was seen as one of the main instruments of education, enlightenment and propaganda. Having come to believe in the influential force of cinema, the revolution, sooner or later, had to subject it to strict regulations. Such a process of normalisation came in the aftermath of August 1968, making it impossible to judge how the New Wave might have matured without such powerful political intervention. It might be that innovation was nurtured as a protest against normalisation. The banning of **SUNSHINE IN A NET**, Chytilova's **DAISIES** and Jakubisko's **DESERTER AND THE NOMADS** illustrates a direct link between culture and politics in a country where the spectator was simultaneously the wielder of absolute power and the embodiment of absolute authority. There, film became the major irritant, an open wound for political authority, bizarrely justifying Lindsay Anderson's quote (referred to in Hames's book, *Czechoslovak New Wave*) that the conditions for film-making in Czechoslovakia had every chance of being the best in the world.

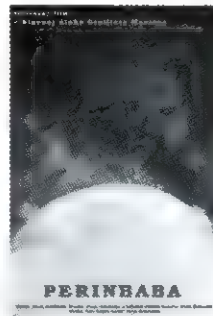
Juraj Jakubisko filmography

- 1960 POSLEDNY NALET ('The Last Air-Raid') - short
- 1961 STRIEBORNY VIETOR ('Silver Wind') - short
- 1962 PRVA TRIEDA ('The First Form') - short
- 1962 MLČENÍ ('Silence') - short
- 1963 TRI ROZPRAVSKÝ, VKRULKA, KADZDÝ DEN MA SVOJE MENO - short
- 1964 VYSTAHOVALECKÉ PIESNE - short
- 1965 ČAKAJU NA GODOTA ('Waiting for Godot') - short
- 1965 DEST - ('Rain') - short
- 1967 KRISTOVE ROKY ('The Crucial Years')
- 1968 ZBEHOVIA A PUTNÍCI ('The Deserter & The Nomads')
- 1969 VTACKOVIA, SIROTY A BLAZNÍ ('Birds, Orphans and Fools')
- 1970 DOVIDENA V PEKLE ('See You In Hell, Fellows') - finished in 1990
- 1972 STAVBA STOROČIA ('Construction of the Century') - documentary
- 1974 VYSTABA TRANZITNEHO PLYNOVODU ZSSR, NDR ZAPADNA EUROPA - documentary
- 1975 OMNIA VYZAVA, SLOVENSKO, KRAJINA POD TATRAMI - doc'
- 1976 FILMI V MESIACI ČSSP - documentary
- 1977 TRY VREČIA CEMENTU A ŽIVÝ KOHUT, BUBENÍK ČRVENÉHO KRÍZA - documentary
- 1978 DOZINKY '77 - documentary
- 1979 EVA - documentary
- 1979 POSTAV DOM, ZASAD STROM ('Build a House, Plant a Tree')
- 1981 ČESKOSLOVENKO - TRADICNÝ OBCHODY PARTNER ZSSR ('Falsehood Slovak Style')
- 1983 TISICROCNA VELA ('The Millennial Bee')
- 1985 PERINBABA ('The Feather Fairy')
- 1986 FRANKENSTEIN'S TANTE ('Frankenstein's Aunt') - a 13 episode TV series, cut down in 1987 to make a feature called **PEHAVY MAX A STRASIDLA** ('Freckled Max and the Spooks')
- 1989 SEDIM NA KONARI A JE MI DOBRE ('Sitting on a Branch Enjoying Myself', or 'Sitting Pretty on a Branch')
- 1990 POD ČUDZOU VLÁJKOU
- 1990 TAKMER RUŽOVÝ PRÍBEH ('A Rosy Story')
- 1992 LEPSÍ BYT BOHATÝ A ZDRAVÝ AKO CHUDOBNÝ A CHORÝ ('It's Better to be Wealthy and Healthy Than Poor and Ill')
- 1996 NEJASNÁ SPRÁVA O KNOCI SVĚTA EN TOURNAGE ('An Ambiguous Report About the End of the World')

(Based on information in *Le Cinema Tcheque et Slovak*, ed. Eva Zaoralova, Jean-Loup Passek, additional information from Francis Brewster)



SEDIM NA KONARI A JE MI DOBRE.



Alain Jessua

by *Pete Tombs*

Alain Jessua is, perhaps, the Orson Welles of French cinema. He made a big splash, critically and commercially, with his first two features, but then seemed to lose his way and has never really fulfilled the promise he once showed. Also like Orson Welles, Jessua for a while became an exile from his home country, living in the States for several years. Later he described how sorry he was to say goodbye to New York, a city he found fascinating and stimulating. Perhaps leaving was his biggest mistake, for it was at just that point (1971) that the new American cinema of Altman, Rafelson and Nichols began to have its early successes with exactly the kind of films that Jessua attempted to make back in France. Popular films with a message; 'punchy, sappy, muscular cinema', as he described it.

Jessua was born in Paris in 1932 and began in the film industry at a very young age. He was only 19 when he got his first job as assistant to Jacques Becker. Unlike most of the contemporary 'new wave' of Godard, Chabrol and Truffaut, Jessua learned about films by helping to make them, not by watching and writing about them. In fact, he says that 'one ought not to go to the cinema too much if one really wants to do something personal.'

His early work was far from glamorous. On Ophüls's *MADAME DE...* he had the job of cleaning up the horseshit left after filming a carriage scene. But 'I was delighted. Delighted, because everything that was part of making a film was equally magical, and a studio was—yes, actually—a dream factory.'

At this time Jessua had not really considered becoming a writer or director. Then, in 1955, he had a bad car accident that put him out of operation for quite awhile. It was during this period of enforced idleness that he conceived the idea for his first film, a short called *LÉON LA LUNE*. During the shooting he learned a vital lesson: 'that I knew nothing at all; my four years of work were useless to me'. He came to

realise that in cinema there were no rules. 'People have talked about cinematographic grammar. That's for the birds....All that one can say, if absolutely necessary, is that when two characters look at each other, they ought not to look in the same direction. And still one is not certain...'

He decided that cinema is, or should be, a process of experimentation, of constant change. What is important is the personal vision. That, combined with a strong sense of the moral purpose of cinema, is the essential Alain Jessua.

LÉON LA LUNE was quite successful. It won the Jean Vigo prize and gave Jessua the credibility to plan his first full length feature. Released in 1963, *LA VIE À L'ENVERS* (Upside Down) showed both the value of his long apprenticeship in film and his strong desire to experiment and push the boundaries of the medium.

One of the jobs he had had as an assistant was working in Marseilles on a series of Flash Gordon shorts for American TV. The programmes were made quickly and were often shot simultaneously, using the same sets, actors and even the same camera angles. Only the costumes and dialogue were changed to denote the different stories they belonged to. This insight into the mechanics of the cinematic illusion went some way to informing *LA VIE À L'ENVERS*. The film uses all sorts of cinematic tricks (jump cuts, a sound track unrelated to the action, selective focus) to take us into the unique perceptions of a man going mad—or who might be consciously retreating into a world of his own. That Jessua leaves the possibility open for both interpretations is indicative of his enormous subtlety as a film maker.

As suggested by his comments on the pernicious effects of too much cinema, Jessua is uneasy about the effects of what the French situationists called 'the society of the spectacle'. The consumer society, advertising images and TV. For his next film, 1967's *JEU DE MASSACRE*, he explored these ideas through the world of the comic strip.

Given the subject and the time it was made it would have been easy to have made a psychedelic, pop art extravaganza. Jessua was more crafty. The comic strips (drawn by Guy Peellært) feature only occasionally and always as actual strips rather than as part of the action. It's through subtle, and very beautiful, use of colour and soundtrack that Jessua merges the boundaries of reality and illusion. A husband and wife team, Pierre and Jacqueline, are visited by a rich young eccentric, Bob, who is convinced that he is the subject of the strips they write. Fascinated by him, they actually begin to draw on his real life for their stories, causing Bob to become even more obsessed with his fictional alter ego.

Following the success of **JEU DE MASSACRE**, which won prizes at several festivals, including Cannes, Jessua wanted to film outside France. He had felt severely restricted by the limited budgets of his first two features and hoped to draw on the production and distribution advantages that working in Hollywood could bring. So began nearly five years of having projects 'in development', none of which finally came to fruition. His most ambitious scenario, *The Blue Planet* was a sort of science fiction film that was to have starred Julie Christie. **DARLING** and **FAHRENHEIT 451** had made her a name both in France and the US. She was to play the wife of an astronaut who comes to discover that the base he worked in hides some sinister secrets.

Jessua said in an early interview that 'an abortive project... must anyway give rise to another that will express it differently'. In the light of this it's interesting to speculate on how much of *The Blue Planet* went into the film that Jessua finally made, back in France, in 1972. That film, **TRAITEMENT DE CHOC**, also featured a closed community (in this case a health farm) and an investigative heroine who uncovers more than is good for her. **TRAITEMENT DE CHOC** was a horror film and much more conventional than anything Jessua had done so far. He expressed his aims succinctly as 'to make audiences think and yet avoid demagogical moralising and the pitfalls of films that try to prove something. My chief aim is to give audiences entertainment, emotion and sometimes a shiver.' Whether the film did that in France it's hard to know, but in England it was released (by Antony Balch) as **DOCTOR IN THE NUDE** to capitalise on Alain Delon's full frontal exposure on a double bill with **TRUCK STOP WOMEN**. Jessua's earlier films had played the arthouse circuit and garnered respectable notices. **DOCTOR IN THE NUDE** played the Jacey in Soho and few critics bothered to seek it out.

Jessua's next few films followed the conventional path set by **TRAITEMENT. ARMAGEDDON**, again with Alain Delon, was an American style thriller, **LES CHIENS** was a political film with a strong anti-racist message and **PARADIS POUR TOUS** had science fiction trappings. For financial reasons Jessua then had to make a film very quickly. He went back to an idea he had first suggested in 1972, right after **TRAITEMENT DE CHOC**. This was an adaption of the Frankenstein story. His first attempt had been aborted by the appearance of **FLESH FOR FRANKENSTEIN**. Now he decided to mount a comedy version starring Eddy Mitchell, a sort of French Ian Dury, as the creature. In this modern version (**FRANKENSTEIN '90**), Victor Frankenstein is an electronics expert who makes a partner for his creature out of the bodies of murdered disco dancers. The creature prefers Frankenstein's girlfriend, Elizabeth, leaving the scientist to make it with his sexy female robot.

The film was squarely aimed at the local market, full of very Gallic humour, and showed how hemmed-in Jessua's ambitions had become over the years. This was even more marked in his next film, 1988's **EN TOUTE INNOCENCE**. The strong cast (Michel Serrault and Nathalie Baye) were the main attraction in this vicious revenge thriller.

Following the film's lukewarm reception, Jessua was glad to accept a job as director of a prestigious Franco-Indian cultural project. He passed a happy couple of years jetting between Bombay and Paris, but was concerned that he could end up spending the rest of his career as a bureaucrat - and he had many more films he wanted to make. The 1990s were a disappointing period for him, as they were for many continental film-makers. Funding was an enormous problem and it was hardly good for the soul to spend 18 months on a project to see it collapse into dust before filming had even begun. But Jessua had been here before. Eventually, he got the green light for his latest film **LES COULEURS DU DIABLE**. Based on the book by Giles Blunt, this is a version of the Faust legend, set in the glitzy art world where an unscrupulous dealer can take a struggling unknown and turn him into a star overnight. At the time of writing, filming was planned to start in Paris.

Jessua is stoical about the low visibility of his post-'60s films outside France. He speaks knowingly of the Hollywood dominance of the world's cinema screens, just as marked in Europe as in the States. Let's hope that **LES COULEURS DU DIABLE** sees this always interesting and sometimes outstanding film-maker back on form.

ALAIN JESSUA FILMOGRAPHY

As director

- 1956 **LÉON LA LUNE** (short)
 1963 **LA VIE À L'ENVERS** / Life Upside Down / Inside Out
 1967 **JEU DE MASSACRE** / Comic Strip Hero / The Killing Game
 1973 **TRAITEMENT DE CHOC** / Shock Treatment /
 Doctor in the Nude
 1977 **ARMAGUEDON** / Armageddon (Fr/It)
 1978 **LES CHIENS** / The Dogs
 1982 **PARADIS POUR TOUS**
 1984 **FRANKENSTEIN '90**
 1987 **EN TOUTE INNOCENCE**
 1997 **LES COULEURS DU DIABLE** / Colours of the Devil

As assistant director

- 1952 **CASQUE D'OR** (dir. Jacques Becker)
 1953 **MADAME DE...** (dir. Max Ophüls)
MAMSELLE NITOUCHE (dir. Yves Allegret)
METIER DE DANSEUR (dir. Jacques Baratier)
CHEVALIER DE MENILMONTANT (dir. Jacques Baratier)
 1954 **OASIS** (dir. Yves Allegret)
 1955 **LOLA MONTEZ** (dir. Max Ophüls)
 1960 **LE HUITIÈME JOUR** (dir. Marcel Hanoun)
TERRAIN VAGUE (dir. Marcel Carné)

Other projects:

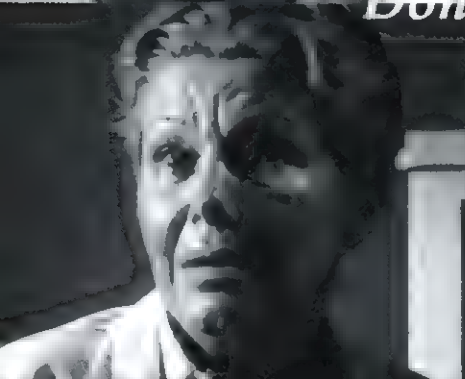
- La planète bleu* (The Blue Planet) - unrealised
Les panthères blanches (The White Panthers) - unrealised

▼ *Traitement de Choc*





Don't Look in the Basement



Don't Open the Door



S.F. Brownrigg's Southern Blues

by Stephen Thrower

Despite having made four excellent horror films between 1973 and 1980, S.F. Brownrigg has received little attention from genre fans, probably because his gloomy little tales lack the extravagant gore and nudity offered by America's better-known horror auteurs of the period. His persistently downbeat approach to the genre has also barred him from wider cult appreciation. None of his movies has much in the way of overt humour, except for what's to be had from observing his sleaziest characters going through their paces, and due to the efforts of his largely skillful repertory cast there are none of the usual cheap laughs at the expense of bad actors. What he does have is a real talent for depicting various white trash characters of the American south, and the oppressive backwoods locations in which they live.

Brownrigg's earliest work in the industry was as sound-man for low-budget directors like Irvin Berwick and fellow Texan Larry Buchanan. This, plus his wartime experience as a cameraman on Army training films, prepared the way for his first directorial venture. Chiming with a new era of horror, its success on the drive-in circuit was immediate and set the 35 year old director on course for an utterly distinctive run of horrific mood-pieces, crafted with his own unique style and sensibility.

Initially called 'The Forgotten' (you can see why that title had to go), **DON'T LOOK IN THE BASEMENT** (1973) was shot in just 12 days and looks to have been made on half the usual shoestring. The only location is a grim, sparsely furnished three-storey concrete block standing on a dismal plot of land, seemingly in the middle of nowhere. The plot concerns the frightful goings-on at a privately run lunatic asylum, where a bizarre roster of lunatics are presided over by Dr Stephens (Michael Harvey), a 'progressive' psychiatrist who "doesn't believe in the doctor/patient relationship." It isn't long before one of the patients demonstrates his lack of

faith in the doctor/patient relationship, by whacking Doctor Stephens in the head with an axe. When new nurse Charlotte Beale (Rosie Holotik) arrives, she is greeted by Dr Masters (Anne MacAdams), an imposing older woman who informs her of Stephens's violent death and seems very anxious to be rid of her.

For the first thirty minutes we are treated to a procession of grotesques as the script puts the inmates of this miserable bedlam through their paces. There's a paranoid soldier (Hugh Feagin) awaiting enemy attack, a deranged woman (Camilla Carr) mothering a baby doll, a guilt-ridden ex-judge (the excellent Gene Ross, the cornerstone of Brownrigg's rep cast) obsessed with his past hypocrisies, a hulking lobotomised black man (William Bill McGhee) reduced to a state of childish passivity, and a weird old lady called Mrs Callingham (Rhea MacAdams) who, according to Masters, "has a number of interesting worlds." She also has some of the film's best lines, particularly her habit of quoting with gurgling menace from *The Fairies*, by 19th century poet William Allingham (whence the old lady's name): "Up the airy mountain, Down the rushy glen, We daren't go a-hunting, For fear of little men." Off with the faeries she may be, but she's the only patient to grasp what's going on around her, offering cryptic warnings to the new arrival. After a brief walk outside with Nurse Beale, she sweetly asks the naive young woman if she'd enjoyed herself. When the answer is an enthusiastic "Yes!", the old crone abruptly glowers, "Well don't be surprised if we never go again!"

It isn't long before Nurse Beale starts to suspect that all is not as it should be: Dr Masters' understanding of professional protocol seems, well, rather crude. "I'm the doctor and you're the nurse, and what I do decides what you will do!" she yells. Violence escalates, and Beale really starts to crack up when Mrs Callingham is found with her tongue cut out, moaning incoherently and belching up blood.

If the film has a problem, it's mainly a lack of suspense - the 'lunatics taking over the asylum' theme is scarcely concealed throughout. Nurse Beale's descent from cool professional to gibbering lunatic is perhaps too sudden, but the problem is really a matter of the film's uncertain timescale. A few weeks locked in that concrete cage (actually the dorm block of a Texas religious college) would doubtless drive anyone crazy! On the other hand, the poverty-stricken setting actually helps the film, heightening the combination of theatricality and morbid realism, giving the social stereotypes a shabby and compelling edge, and imposing on the viewer an uncomfortable sense of claustrophobia.

The film also showcases the talents of Brownrigg's actors, many of whom would go on to appear in his other work (In fact Ross, Weenick, Fulton, Feagin and Carr were already known to Brownrigg, as they'd all appeared in his friend and mentor Larry Buchanan's **A BULLET FOR PRETTY BOY** in 1970). Annabelle Weenick, who assisted on **DON'T LOOK IN THE BASEMENT** behind the camera, also excels in front of it (working under the name of Anne MacAdams). She gives the role of 'Dr Masters' a dauntingly hard edge, reminiscent of late period Bette Davis or Shelley Winters. Of the male cast, Gene Ross is particularly compelling in his first of four great Brownrigg roles, and I did once suspect (misguidedly as it turned out) that he might actually be the director, playing under a pseudonym. Texan-born Ross is always convincingly villainous, a depraved, acne-pitted menace with acting skills the equal of better known Southern actors like M. Emmet Walsh, whom he also resembles physically.

The final scene has Nurse Beale rescued by Sam, the black lobotomy case, and Masters attacked and savagely murdered by the remaining lunatics. Here, as in a few other scenes, censor cuts were made in many versions of the film (including the original British video release with its wonderfully vague cover blurb proclaiming, "A feeling of unease crept over her..."). The full X-rated version is considerably more graphic and this longer version, with its orgiastic gore climax, is now available at last on Region 1 DVD.

It's typical of the S.F. Brownrigg experience that we are left with feelings more of sadness than of horror - **DON'T LOOK IN THE BASEMENT** ends with Sam, alone and drenched in blood, crying his retarded child's tears, until the end credits deliver us from total gloom with a pulp-comics coda of ghoulish Mrs Callingham, issuing her dire warning to leave "*and never, never come back!*" Compassionate without

being sentimental, Brownrigg skewed his story into territory not perhaps immediately associated with drive-in horror, and his concern for the feelings of his characters distinguishes his work from the grand-guignol humour of H.G. Lewis or the seething nihilism of Andy Milligan. **DON'T LOOK IN THE BASEMENT** is an engagingly dour little movie well worth seeing if you enjoy horror with a downwards emotional slant, and whilst not a *bona fide* 'classic of the genre', serves as a good preliminary to what is probably Brownrigg's best film.

"In the tradition of *The Godfather Part 2!*", boasted the unscrupulous distributor responsible for releasing **POOR WHITE TRASH PART 2** on a double bill with Harold Daniels's re-issued 1957 pot-boiler **POOR WHITE TRASH**. Brownrigg's 1974 film was originally entitled **SCUM OF THE EARTH**, and more than any of his films demonstrates a real talent for depicting ugly, morally depraved characters rubbing up against each other in a variety of repellent ways. It's also distinguished by some great dialogue and a performance by Gene Ross that oozes from the screen like pus from a syphilitic chancre. How else to describe a man who introduces his pregnant wife as "*the skinny one with the big belly*", and repels her offer of sexual attention by snarling "*I don't want no puckered old blown-up balloon!*" We soon discover that he is very friendly with his sluttish, sarcastic daughter: when he tells her that he intends to have a talk "*real private, like*" with new arrival Helen, she taunts "*I know what privates you got in mind - the same sort you been pokin' in me since I wuz twelve.*" This is followed by a heated exchange about how he gave his daughter the clap...

But I'm getting ahead of myself. The story begins with Helen (Norma Moore) and her new husband, who arrive at a holiday cottage in the woods where they plan to spend their honeymoon. Before the credits have even rolled, their idyll is ruined when a mystery attacker slams a nasty great axe into the husband's chest. Fleeing in terror as night falls, Helen encounters sleazy patriarch Odis Pickett (Ross), whose rickety old shack is the only dwelling for miles around. He persuades the hysterical woman to stay overnight in his decrepit, malodorous shack, frightening her with a sneering description of the long walk through dense woodland to the nearest telephone almost ten miles away. Reluctant, but terrified of the unseen killer, Helen stays overnight with the lascivious 'Pick' and his nasty daughter Sarah (Camilla Carr), retarded son Bo (Charlie Dell) and docile pregnant wife Emmy (Ann Stafford), whose stoicism

towards her smelly old hog of a husband is perhaps the story's most horrible facet. Whilst father and daughter take great delight in taunting the distraught 'city gal', Emmy persuades Bo to fetch help, knowing her "likkered up" husband will attempt to rape Helen. Bo is murdered, impaled on a wrought iron fence for his troubles, and his body dumped on the porch. Further killings take place until the murderer is revealed, provoking a final flurry of mayhem and climaxing with a cathartic shotgun blast. As a morbid C&W song ("Death is a Family Affair") plays us out, the credits rise over the blank-faced heroine sitting on the porch with Emmy, who smiles placidly and promises to look after her.

SCUM OF THE EARTH improves on its predecessor, although it remains a relatively low-key offering in comparison to **THE TEXAS CHAIN SAW MASSACRE**, that other tale of Deep South family life released around the same time. Once again narrative momentum is not the film's greatest asset, instead Brownrigg revels in confining us in close quarters with the sort of family the cast of **PINK FLAMINGOS** might look down on. Robert Alcott (who'd previously worked on Larry Buchanan films before lensing **BASEMENT** and this one for Brownrigg) excels with what at first seems a limited palette, his occasional subtle use of coloured lighting giving a surprising variety to the wretched interiors and shadowy, threatening woodlands. Art direction is more appreciable too - it seems that this time out the budget could extend to rolls of hideous wallpaper as well as **BASEMENT**'s battered furniture. Robert Farrar, whose scores for Brownrigg's movies are an integral part of their mood, livens up a little with his electric-guitar based incidental music, lending a stylized exploitation crackle to the proceedings. Most importantly though, there's a more entertaining script on offer here, and the credits name none other than ole Pick himself, Gene Ross, as writer of 'Additional Dialogue'. Replete with choice *bon mots* such as "I'll whup you till Hell won't have it!", this is a movie for connoisseurs of fetid verbal sniping.

Indeed the film is compelling as much for what is said as for what is shown: the violence meted out by the killer seems almost prim in comparison to the psychological violence eating away at the dysfunctional Pickett family. Tucked away within what is essentially an exploitation treatment are some barbed and rancorous attacks on the primacy of the patriarchal figure in Southern family life: and in the figure of the mother, Emmy, the writers and director

imply dismay at the breaking of womens' spirits in abusive family situations. Many a thesis on exploitation films would buckle under the weight of such claims of 'social criticism' and it wouldn't do to overstress them here, but again it's the emotional quality of Brownrigg's film that justifies at least some appraisal at this level. He might not be Tennessee Williams but the comparison isn't entirely fatuous either.

If you found **DON'T LOOK IN THE BASEMENT** and **SCUM OF THE EARTH** too claustrophobic, then you might have a better time with **DON'T OPEN THE DOOR** (1975), a marginally less doom-laden offering. Unusually, we are treated to a few brief glimpses of the outside world, even in one heady moment the high street of a small American town - quite a contrast to the earlier films, whose characters might as well have been living on Mars for all the contact they enjoyed with society. Here Brownrigg actually allows his cast a few breaths of fresh air, before resuming his customary practice of smothering them in his morbid narrative.

The story concerns a young woman, Amanda Post (Susan Bracken), who is summoned to the house she grew up in to attend to her dying grandmother (Rhea MacAdams). As a little girl she'd witnessed the murder of her mother in the house, but the shadowy assailant had never been caught. On her arrival she discovers that the house is overrun with an assortment of typical Brownrigg weirdos, all of whom show an uncharitable interest in what is to happen to the old woman's property after her death. There's the family doctor (Jim Harrell), who refuses to admit the sick woman to hospital and insists on administering her medication himself, a local judge (Gene Ross, again), and - most sinister of all - Claude Kearn (Larry O'Dwyer), the curator of a strange museum nearby, who is angling to inherit the house's furnishings and the old woman's collection of antique garments and jewellery. A consummately slimy character, he also cherishes memories of 'Miss Post' when she was a little girl, with a passion that seems very dubious indeed...

When Amanda bursts in on these vultures and orders them out of the house, she appears more than equal to the task of seeing them off, but she soon begins to crack when subjected to a series of lascivious, leeringly perverse phone calls, from someone who seems able to observe her every move. Her breakdown is accelerated when the mystery caller tells her he is the one who stabbed her mother to death. The initially spacious old house becomes a maddening, suffocating death-trap (sort of), and in a semi-frenzy of

melodramatic giggling and muted psychedelic montage Amanda becomes the third Brownrigg heroine to lose her marbles...

Much of the action takes place in the rambling old house, but this time the camera is allowed a few surprising flights of fancy. It's possible that Brownrigg was influenced here by Mario Bava, or even Dario Argento (don't laugh!) whose films must then have recently filtered down to the Southern states. (The story and treatment suggest parallels with both **DEEP RED** and **SUSPIRIA** - the former was threaded through the gates of American drive-in projectors in the mid-seventies under the auspices of distributor Joseph Brenner, who retitled it **THE HATCHET MURDERS**). Certainly the scene in which Bracken walks up an ornate spiral staircase whilst the camera cranes unsteadily but doggedly abreast of her through its centre resembles a low budget version of Argento's bravura technique: and when she enters the attic, a domed, blue-tinted room illuminated by sunlight streaming through huge red-paned windows, the influence is almost palpable. Robert Farrar's score dredges up a bit more energy than usual, although he still insists on stifling us with his favourite sadistic device - the sound of muffled flutes...

In the face of all this talk of style, it's worth singling out the sleazy high point of **DON'T OPEN THE DOOR**. After repeated calls have terrorised Amanda into a state of jittery obedience, the mystery caller (have a guess...) browbeats the sobbing girl into making "...the sounds... that you make... when you are making love!" It's an almost comically perverse scene, made even more repellent when Amanda's embarrassed attempts to comply push the caller into a grotesque, panting orgasm, with his hand stroking a half-naked little-girl doll all the while.

By now we can see that Brownrigg builds his work on the backs of female characters, always initially strong yet destined to tumble into madness. This puts his work at a fault-line running through the genre - on the one hand there's the admirable ploy of placing a strong but vulnerable female at the centre of narratives generally consumed by young males eager for identification figures, on the other there's the matter of why Brownrigg's females must pay for their initial displays of strength with degradation and madness. I would cite the gentler mode of direction Brownrigg uses as a guide to his sympathies, since although his female leads always crack under pressure, there's no sympathy raised for the aggressive or threatening males

around her and the plight of the disturbed female is always at the core of the films' priorities. These are not requiems for displaced patriarchy!

For horror fans of a more bloodthirsty bent, **DON'T OPEN THE DOOR** has little to raise the pulse-rate, and it's to the mood that we must once again turn for our pleasure. I confess that I would happily watch another five movies made in this idiom by the same cast and crew, but it's not hard to see how Brownrigg's work slipped from favour in the drive-ins. There simply isn't enough violence or spectacle for an exploitation sales-pitch, and the massacre that brought his debut film to its alarming conclusion seems far, far away in this talky and restrained tale. **DON'T OPEN THE DOOR** is probably the least stifling of Brownrigg's films, but it still remains obstinately down in the dumps. Not that it competes with his next offering, however, a film that's the cinematic equivalent of a fistful of barbiturates with a Jack Daniels chaser...

When I first reviewed **KEEP MY GRAVE OPEN** (1976) for *Shock Xpress* in 1988, I was extremely out of patience with it, calling it a "chloroformed clinker" and claiming that its "muddy photography and dismal art design drag an already soporific story down to rock bottom." I now unreservedly retract this criticism! The film is very much of a piece with its predecessors and, although the plot is perhaps sketchier, there's a lot to be enjoyed if the viewer is prepared for another Brownriggian mood-piece with just a few genre 'shocks'. As for "muddy photography" - DVD releases of exploitation films once presumed to be poorly photographed have shown many a film pundit that it's not a good idea to casually criticize the photography of a film based solely on VHS evidence (a look at the DVD of Joe D'Amato's **BEYOND THE DARKNESS** was particularly chastening!).

The plot concerns a troubled housewife who lives in a posh farmhouse, set back from the nearest town by acres of land. It soon becomes apparent that she is mentally unbalanced, and is committing various murders whilst blaming her brother Kevin, who seems to have died. Despite this, she talks as if he is still around the house, leaving trays of food outside his bedroom door and creating an unsettling sense of an imminent 'other' occupying the building. A hitchhiker looking for food, a local prostitute and a young farmhand are among the schizoid woman's victims. After a brief visit from Doctor Gene Ross, the tormented woman kills herself by swallowing a handful of sleeping pills and broken glass.



In the confusing epilogue, Kevin turns up at her graveside and returns to the mansion. Picking up a shovel, he grumbles "*The least you could have done was bury them for me!*"

KEEP MY GRAVE OPEN devotes an uncommon amount of time to shots of the heroine doing the washing up, unpacking groceries and generally wandering around. The narrative struggles to keep this withdrawn woman attached to possible sources of story interest, often resorting to desperate measures (such as the hungry hitch-hiker and the young man who is obsessed with horses). One can see the lead character as emblematic of Brownrigg's difficulties as a storyteller. He is drawn to isolated or hermit-like characters (the 'Forgotten' residents of an asylum, a collapsing Bayou family others might regard as 'Scum', a young woman in a house of bad memories) and wants to examine their lives, but the pressures of commercial film-making require that he provide moments of classic tension and release. With the first three films there's a compromise - the films chart the course of outsiders forced to enter tightly woven situations away from the reassurance of conven-

tional society. A new nurse at an asylum, a woman fleeing a violent attack, a relative called back to her childhood home - these women are the audience's identification figures as we enter their disturbing new environments. The tension between their 'innocence' and the venal situations they walk into keeps the narrative engine ticking, even though when it comes to pace Brownrigg's movies are at the outer edge of exploitation tolerance. What makes **KEEP MY GRAVE OPEN** different, and possibly less commercial still, is that the lead character is no longer someone who gets tangled up in sickness - she already embodies it. This seems to have short circuited Brownrigg's invention. **KEEP MY GRAVE OPEN** needed to rise to another level, and although there is an interesting shift, from **BASEMENT** and **SCUM**'s innocents, through **DOOR**'s woman returning to her past, and on into **GRAVE**'s female protagonist who is the author rather than the victim of horrors, it never quite makes the leap. It would have been a bolder move to give us the disturbed lead character's perceptions 'raw' in preference to the exterior views provided by her victims. What 'subjective' images there are come with explanatory reverse angles which give the game away too readily. We have plenty of opportunity to see the heroine as deranged and self-deluded, whereas, if seen through her eyes, the film would have profitably included 'Kevin' all the while: just as Robert Altman gave visual priority to the delusions of Catherine (Susannah York) in his marvellous film **IMAGES**. In this context, the bizarre twist ending (as incoherent as the climax of Joe D'Amato's **BEYOND THE DARKNESS** or Lamberto Bava's **MACABRE**) is maybe Brownrigg's final, gallant but implausible reiteration of his favoured theme - the woman isn't crazy, man is the agent of destruction!

Mind you, there's still a great deal to admire in this swansong to a special sort of Southern cinema. **KEEP MY GRAVE OPEN** feels like a familiar but maybe too-seductive alcoholic drink, an old favourite, settling into the synapses and drenching the mind with its mixture of darkness and melancholy. I find myself imagining a world where the 1980s didn't lead to 'yuppies' and 'Reaganomics' and 'power ballads' and 'Top Gun', but instead to six or seven more films by the wonderful and sorely missed Mr S.F. Brownrigg, complete with cinemas willing to show them and audiences willing to watch. Let's give those titles a last hurrah - **Keep Open the Door on the Scum in the Basement!** - we can all benefit from a passage through this morbid but strangely vital director's "interesting worlds"!



REVIEWS

PMB

36.15: Code Pere Noel • **Amityville 2: The Possession** • Amuck! • **Autopsia** • Baby Blood • **Bad** • The Beast in Heat • The Bell of Hell • **La Belle Noiseuse** • Blade of the Ripper • Blood Delirium • **Cannibal Apocalypse** • The Case of the Bloody Iris • Chaos Pervers • Cold-Blooded Beast • Crimes of the Black Cat • **Death Bed: The Bed That Eats** • Delicatessen • Demons of the Mind • **Don't Deliver Us From Evil** • Don't Go in the House • **Duffer** • The Erotic Rites of Frankenstein • **The Etruscan Kills Again** • Excesse De Sade • Eyeball • The Female Butcher • La femme publique • Five Dolls for an August Moon • **Four Times... That Night** • Freak Orlando • Fury of the Wolfman • The German Chainsaw Massacre • The Gestapo's Last Orgy • Hell is a City • Horror Rises from the Tomb • The House With Laughing Windows • Images • **In the Eye of the Hurricane** • In the Folds of the Flesh • Island of Death • **Kill, Baby... Kill!** • The Kingdom • **Knife of Ice** • Laurin • Licantropo • The Link • The Lorelei's Grasp • Lorna The Exorcist • Lucker • Macabre • **Maladolescenza** • Matador • Mes nuits sont plus belle que vos jours • Les minets sauvage • Mondo Weirdo • Moonlight Sonata • **Murder By Design** • Naked Lunch • Necronomicon • The Night Evelyn Came Out of the Grave • **Night of the Devils** • The Night Train Murders • Nightwatch • **L'occhio dietro la parete** • Opera • Paganini • **The Passenger** • Patrick Still Lives • Performance • Pierrot le fou • **Pink Narcissus** • **Plot of Fear** • La portiera nuda • **Rabid Dogs** • Requiem for a Vampire • **The Road to Fort Alamo** • Robak • La Rose de Fer • The Sadist of Notre Dame • <Safe> • Shock Treatment • Short Night of the Glass Dolls • The Slasher is the Sex Maniac • Something Creeping in the Dark • The Spider Labyrinth • Story of a Cloistered Nun • Tenderness of the Wolves • Terror • Terror 2000 • **Terror Express** • Tragica cerimonia en villa Alexander • Tras el Cristal • **L'uomo, la donna, la bestia** • Venere D'Ille • Venus in Furs • Video-Void • Wild Beasts • The Witch's Curse • Women's Camp 119 • Wrony • Zeder

* highlighted titles previously unpublished in Eyeball

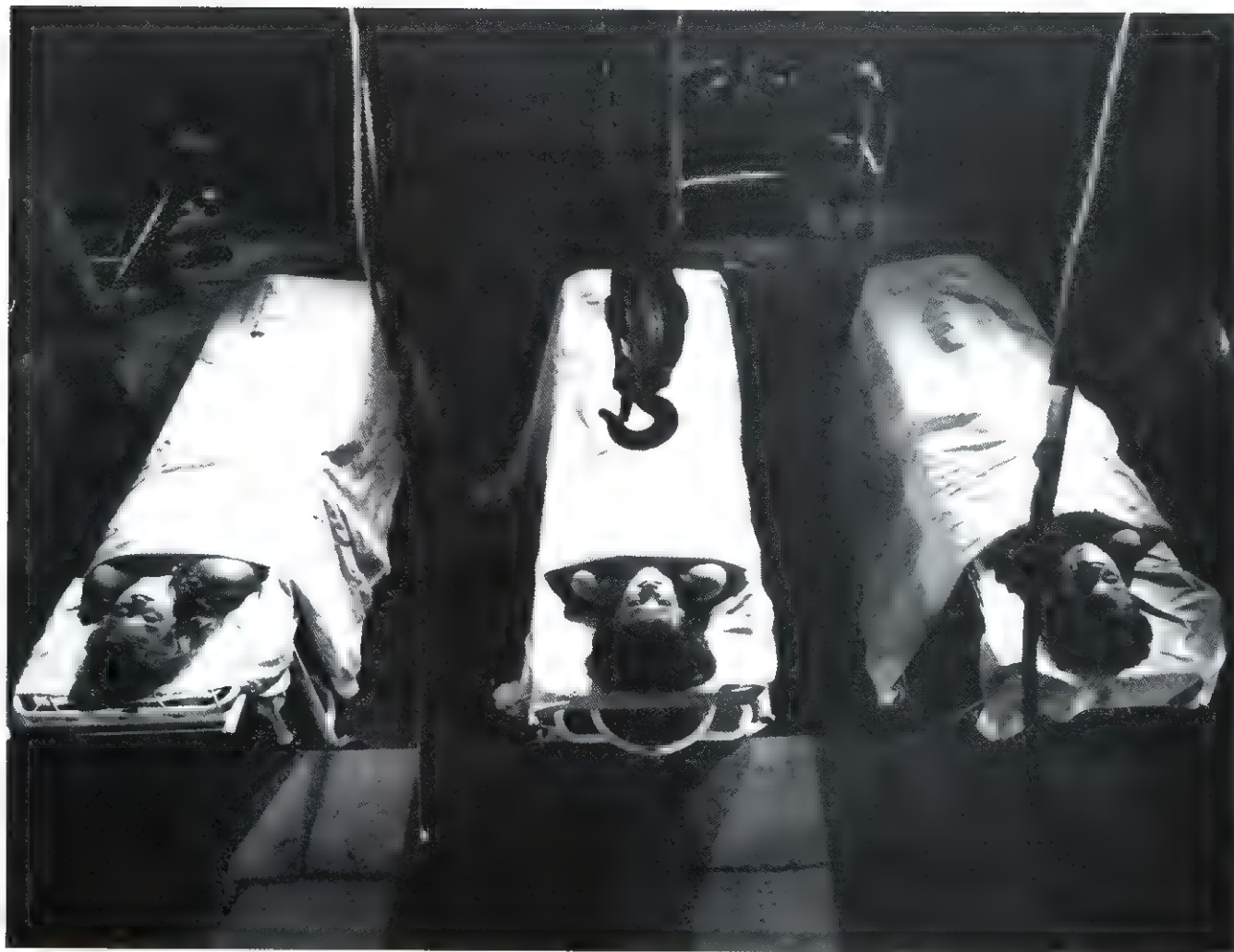


▲ Tony Kendall and Helga Liné in *THE LORELEI'S GRASP*

Events are leading to a tragic conclusion in *THE BELL OF HELL* ▼

▼ Carroll Baker in trouble again, this time in Umberto Lenzi's *KNIFE OF ICE*



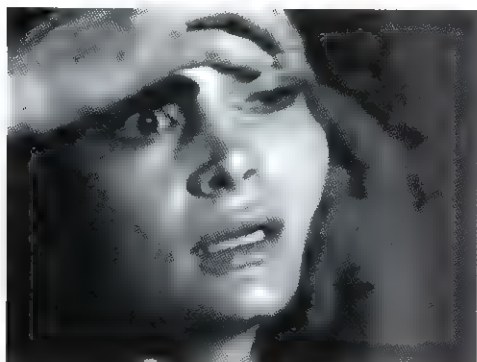


▲ THE BELL OF HELL

▼ EYEBALL

▼ THE KINGDOM

▼ TERROR 2000





36:15 - CODE PERE NOEL
aka **DIAL CODE SANTA CLAUS / GAME OVER,**
HIDE AND FREAK

France, 1990

writer/director: **René Manzor**

director of photography: **Michel Carrier**

editor: **Christine Pansu**

music: **Jean-Félix Lalanne**

producers: **René Manzor, Jean-Luc Defait, Ziad El Khoury**

cast: **Alain Musy** (Thomas), **Brigitte Fossey** (Julie), **Louis Ducreux** (Grandfather), **Patrick Floersheim** (Santa Claus), **François-Eric Gendron** (Roland), **Franck Capillery** (Le flic), **Stephane Legros**.

Although derivative of American psycho pictures like **SILENT NIGHT, BLOODY NIGHT**, this fairy-tale action picture is made with a great deal of gallic, post-Besson/Beneix verve, and overcomes the familiarity of its premise with the strength of its execution. The child hero (Musy) is a rich kid who kits himself up Rambo-style to adventure with his dog in a rambling, castle-like home, and enjoys playing with bizarre gadgetry. He hooks up through his computer with a psychotic (Floersheim) with a Santa Claus complex, and attracts the madman to him on Christmas Eve, when he has staked out the fireplace to see whether Father Christmas really does come down the chimney. Floersheim arrives with murder in mind, and the kid uses all his ingenuity to protect himself and save his aged and infirm grandfather (Ducreux).

Although it has some mildly irrelevant time-outs dealing with the hero's mother (Fossey) making her way home, the film is mainly an extended game of cat and mouse, with explicit overtones of *Tom and Jerry*. Besieged in the rambling house, Musy converts his toys into weapons in sequences incredibly similar to the subsequent and dreadful John Hughes/Chris Columbus Xmas treat **HOME ALONE**, which might well be an unacknowledged, mutilated-to-pieces remake. Marshalling the suspense devices perfectly, René Manzor manages to work up some sympathy for the put-upon madman, who is undone by such fiendish tricks as a grenade wired to a toy train, and pulls some clever bits of Hitchcockery, such as the moment in which the nearly blind old man has to fire a gun at the struggling kid and villain. The film has a few too many psycho clichés, including the

inevitable last minute revival from an apparent death, but in concentrating on the bizarre character of the child genius, rather than the more usual screaming bimbo, and in using a great deal of sly humour, Manzor's film emerges as a distinctive and offbeat entry in the Santa Psycho cycle.

Kim Newman

Addendum: Manzor headed off to the USA after making **36:15 - CODE PERE NOEL**, landing work on the *Highlander* TV Series, *Red Shoe Diaries*, *The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles* and others. After five years he returned to France to direct **UN AMOUR DE SORCIERE** aka **WITCH WAY LOVE** (1996), a supernatural comedy starring Jean Reno and Vanessa Paradis which Manzor described jokingly as "with great modesty, halfway between **FAUST** and **STAR WARS!**" The film was directed in two distinct versions, French and English, to aid international sales. Manzor told Michel Pascal in 1996: "Everything was filmed twice. So there were two films in the end, one in French and the other in English, which means two lots of editing, two of mixing, etc. But in the end, that's also a chance for **WITCH WAY LOVE** to exist in markets other than just the French screen, and that's what counts! I think that it's an additional opportunity for our cinema: to conserve its roots but at the same time setting out to conquer foreign countries, which are sometime stubborn, by moving beyond the language barrier." He is currently at work on a new feature film, **DÉDALES** ('Mazes'), for release in 2003.

AMITYVILLE 2: THE POSSESSION

USA, 1982

director: **Damiano Damiani**

screenplay: **Dardano Sacchetti, Tommy Lee Wallace**

based on **Hans Holzer's** *Murder in Amityville*

director of photography: **Franco Di Giacomo**

editor: **Sam O'Steen**

music: **Lalo Schiffrin**

producers: **Dino De Laurentiis, Stephen R. Greenwald**

cast: **James Olson** (Father Adamsky), **Burt Young** (Anthony Montelli), **Rutanya Alda** (Dolores Montelli), **Jack Wagner** (Sonny Montelli), **Andrew Prine** (Father Tom), **Diane Franklin** (Patricia Montelli), **Moses Gunn** (Turner), **Ted Ross** (Mr. Booth), **Erika Katz** (Jan Montelli), **Brent Katz** (Mark Montelli).

Italian director Damiano Damiani turns the less than promising idea of a prequel to Stuart Rosenberg's workman-like **AMITYVILLE HORROR** into an exciting pulp joy-ride. It's loosely based on the DeFeo murders, said to have taken place in the famed 'haunted' house in Ocean Avenue before the Lutz family of the first movie took residence, but realism is hardly the issue here. Working in the States with a predominantly American cast and Stateside post-synch quality, Damiani nevertheless endows the project with a piquant Italian flavour, delivering a lively shocker resembling the contemporary efforts of Lucio Fulci. Whilst fulfilling the requirements of a sequel, this moody and perverse item feels very much like an Americanized blend of ideas from Fulci's **HOUSE BY THE CEMETERY** and **THE BEYOND** (hardly surprising, since all three were scripted by Dardano Sacchetti).

You can trust the Italians to stir things up a bit - the evil threat in the first film was manifested through the loss of money and destruction of the dream of home-ownership, a process leading inexorably to the erosion of the patriarchal family. The sequel opts instead for wife-beating and the eruption of sexual taboos within an already dysfunctional household. The father-son relationship is dangerously frayed, with the father's loutish bad temper chafing against the excitable youth's wish for freedom. A highly strung Catholic mother and an intelligent, sexually awakening daughter add to the familial tensions, and two cute pre-pubertals (boy and girl) up the tragedy stakes.

The centrepiece of the story is Sonny's possession; his alienation from his family, his seduction of his sister and eventual slaughter of them all. The demon speaks to the boy through his Walkman headphones, providing the film's most amusing genre update (and several years before rap lyrics provoked the use of PARENTAL ADVISORY stickers on records). Indeed, the film is so successful in its second act that it fails to recover from the climax it delivers about an hour into the film - toting a shotgun, Sonny blows his dad's head off (in a Romeruesque splatter sequence missing from UK prints), before stalking his family through the house and despatching them one by one. In fact, the rate at which the Montelli household is destroyed is a major part of the film's appeal. We're used to haunted houses taking forever to get round to the freaky stuff: Damiani on the other hand has blood gushing from the taps, anti paternal graffiti scrawled on the walls and excremental nastiness splattering people in the cellar within the first fifteen minutes. It's a wonder the

tenants stayed past the first night! The highly un-American incest plot-strand is well-acted by the teenage leads, with an edgy atmosphere generated by the shift from unconscious flirtation to willing immersion in the taboo. "*Do you feel guilty? I don't*", says Patricia to her lustful brother, after a trip to confession fails to catalyse her shame.

It's unusual to see a film about possession where a male body is invaded by demons. In a scene which achieves a nightmarish combination of the terrifying, the absurd and the erotic, the invisible presence lurking in the Montelli house appears to pull open Sonny's shirt and jump up and down on his bare torso, crushing his pale stomach inwards at each impact. In deference to the physical nature of masculine identity, Sonny is possessed only after a pulverising and bullying assault on his body. Whereas Reagan in **THE EXORCIST** is first cajoled and persuaded by an 'invisible friend' into accepting the Devil, **AMITYVILLE 2**'s male host must be physically dominated and overcome. This tallies with the different social attitudes to male and female rape: women are expected to submit more easily than men, often to the detriment of male victims who are left to feel that they failed to offer a truly masculine resistance. In fact the demonic possession throughout this film takes a significantly different form to **THE EXORCIST**, as the possessed boy commits an immensely destructive action (the killing of his family) followed by an agonising period of guilt and horror. Contrast this with Reagan in **THE EXORCIST**, who escapes from the demon's grip in the last few minutes and declares no recollection of what's happened. Sonny's confusion and dismay after the killings is very well-observed, with the demon allowing him an awful glimmer of realisation as he's led away by police. Jack Magnier does pretty well in a complex and demanding role, his leering demonic malice only later sliding into the ridiculous.

From there onwards it's a clichéd latex workout, with irritating levels of phony theology spooned in as if we cared. Monster make-ups showcase the diligence of their creators in classic *Fangoria* front-page style, but the scarier birds have long since fled the coop and diminishing returns soon set in. However - it's fitting that the legacy of a film like **THE EXORCIST** should have been spfx-laden work-outs like this. Despite the Friedkin film's smokescreen of theological seriousness, it was transparently a carnival turn at heart, lucky to be the first of its kind thanks to ground-breaking effects. What critics of the time didn't appreciate was the

way the supernatural offered an alibi to the director, a fun excuse for hurling baroque, unlikely visuals at an audience. Dario Argento understood this very well, as **SUSPIRIA** showed. Damiani's **AMITYVILLE 2** - a sequel to a straight arrow four-square American horror film - is willing to shed more than blood: it uses the supernatural scenario to justify wildly tilting camera angles, excessive prosthetic effects, sexual perversion and lots of Steadicam. Remove the kinkiness and these factors would become the norm in years to come, but they sure appeared fresh on the film's release, oddly in parallel with Sam Raimi's **THE EVIL DEAD** which utilized similar techniques to go even further.

The latter third of the film is definitely hampered by the script's God-bothering remnants, but at least we get to see a prominent Catholic Monsignor conducting a disapproving lecture to Father Adamski whilst hanging out in a black limousine like some Mafia don. Generally though, after the family slaughter it's only really worth persisting to watch Sonny's meltdown into an enjoyably hokey monster in the final moments. As for theology, anyone bothering to take this battle between Good and Evil seriously needs their head examining.

Stephen Thrower

AMUCK!

aka **ALLA RICERCA DEL PIACERE/HOT BED OF SEX/MANIAC MANSION/LEATHER AND WHIPS**
Italy, 1971

writer/director: **Silvio Amadio**
director of photography: **Aldo Giordani**
editor: **Antonio Siciliano**
music: **Teo Uselli**
producer: **Italo Zingarelli**

cast: **Farley Granger** (Richard Stuart), **Barbara Bouchet** (Greta Franklin), **Rosalba Neri** (Eleanora Stuart), **Umberto Raho** (Butler), **Patrizia Viotti**, **Dino Mele** (Rocco), **Peter Martonovic**, **Nino Segurini**.

With **AMUCK!** director Amadio attempts to widen the definition of the *giallo* beyond the usual clichés of the black-gloved killer with flick-knife/straight razor. I'm partial to thrillers set in or around the mouldering splendour of

Venice, and the plot of this perverse psycho-sexual drama unfolds in a big house in the muddy environs of that most photogenic of cities, where the air is as thick with the miasma of moral decay as the effluvium from the swamp itself... Greta (Barbara Bouchet in tip top form) arrives at the home of writer Richard Stewart (a sinister and suave Farley Granger), ostensibly as his new secretary but actually seeking information as to the whereabouts of childhood friend Sally, mysteriously missing since taking on the same position. Greta's first meeting with her new employer sets the tone of this film; "*It's modesty that doesn't allow me to become myself*", he informs Greta, somewhat disingenuously... modesty or guile? Stuart's wife Eleanor (Italian exploitation fave Rosalba Neri) takes an apparent shine to Greta, as it isn't long before she is busy seducing our undercover spy, 'under the covers' as it were! This lesbian scene plays in slow motion for maximum effect, and there is a wonderful shot of a wine glass toppling from the bedside table onto the floor, where it shatters into glistening shards. Naturally we are given plentiful glimpses of all the female protagonists in their naked glory, and a very welcome diversion they are indeed, especially the blonde-haired Bouchet.

It isn't too long before Greta finds that her employers are into some pretty kinky sex games, throwing swinging parties of the kind where long-haired girls dance languidly to 70s Euro-disco whilst smoking dubious looking cigarettes and removing their bras; they even watch a (crap) dodgy porno flick based on the Little Red Riding Hood story - wild'n'wacky to be sure... Greta finds herself sinking further and further into this amoral morass of a lifestyle.

Well, things muddle along with Greta continuing her search for clues as to Sally's fate, being fed regular tid-bits of information by Richard and his wife, as well as being taunted by messages left on the tapes she is supposed to be transcribing. Eventually Richard reveals that Sally was strangled by his animalistic handyman Rocco, a hulking brute with "*the body of a giant and the brain of a child*"; this was apparently an accidental murder (huh?!)... However, Richard neglects to tell Greta that he was present during this tragedy. Rocco (Dino Mele) is a particularly disgusting specimen, all sweat and muscles, and gets to do antisocial things like rape women and ('Mondo' perverts take note) nail live eels to boards before gutting them alive...

After being 'accidentally' shot at by Richard and Eleanor during a duck-hunt, and nearly drowned in quicksand, Greta realises that she is next on the hit-list. In a gripping finale

both Richard and Eleanor are killed by Rocco when the moronic brute turns against them, ignoring their commands to bump off Greta, who had earlier bandaged a wounded finger for him and to whom he feels protective. I guarantee you'll wince at the sight (and sound) of Neri's head being caved in by a crunching collision with a stone fireplace...

AMUCK! is gripping and thoroughly decadent fun. There is plenty to please the eye, with both Neri and Bouchet throwing off their clothes at regular intervals, and the location camerawork by Aldo Giordani fully utilizes the eerie swamps and canals of Venice, despite being neutered by awful full-screen framing on the American videotape I watched. Farley Granger is suitably enigmatic, and Umberto Raho turns in a good red-herring role as a creepy butler before being bloodily despatched - in this flick it isn't the butler who did it! The hilariously dated orgy/party scenes are rendered even more amusing and enjoyable by the use of madness-inducing music, in particular a disco record whose looped female vocals huskily repeat the word "Sexually" over and over until you want to scream for mercy! This would be a good title for Redemption to pick up on one of their Euro-sleaze trawls; so how about it guys? Director Silvio Amadio turned in another weird, sleazy giallo variant, the superb **SMILE BEFORE DEATH** (1972), which also featured Rosalba Neri. Both films are required viewing for those seeking something a little different from the usual Spaghetti Splatter fare served up during the seventies and eighties. Dead groovy...

Nigel Burrell

AUTOPSIA

Spain, 1973

director/writer: **Juan Logar [Juan López García]**

director of photography: **Rafael Pacheco**

editor: **Antonio Ramírez de Loaysa**

Cast: **José Luis Andrés Segura, Hilario Camacho, María José Cantudo, José Marco Davó, Juan Luis Galiardo, Montserrat Julió, Eva León, Antonio Mayans, Betsabé Ruiz, Jack Taylor.**

Indo-China. Bombs and the drone of planes. Buildings blasted to rubble, amongst which the birth of a screaming brat triggers sentimental strings and some retard singing

"Hallelujah!". Cut to stock footage from Vietnam. A voice-over gets passionate about saying "Enough!" He's serious. "Isn't it about time we said 'Enough'?" The often-seen footage of a naked napalm-scarred girl running towards the camera is intercut with shots of the narrator, now onscreen and holding a movie camera, giving the impression that it was he who shot the infamous image. Effort has been made to match the locations. More tub-thumping about the evils of war ensues, more voice-over angst and war footage. It almost gets boring at this point. But here, hidden among the smoke bombs, is the crux of the narrator's problem. In a dramatised combat scene he confronts a Vietcong with his bayonet, pauses briefly in a fit of pacifist angst - and then raises his weapon for the kill. At the last second he is saved from this transgression by the timely intervention of a passing redneck who blows the gook's brains out. Seconds later this would-be peacenik gets hit and we see close-ups of him grovelling around in the mud, croaking "I don't want to die, I don't want to die ..."

America. Commercials. Fashion photography. 'The Me generation'. Our narrator is back at home, brandishing a post-Nam guilty conscience. He rails against the disinterested, apathetic reactions his war correspondence receives. "Even a football match is more important," he complains to his wife, who has to tolerate his ranting and his habit of reading Goethe aloud.

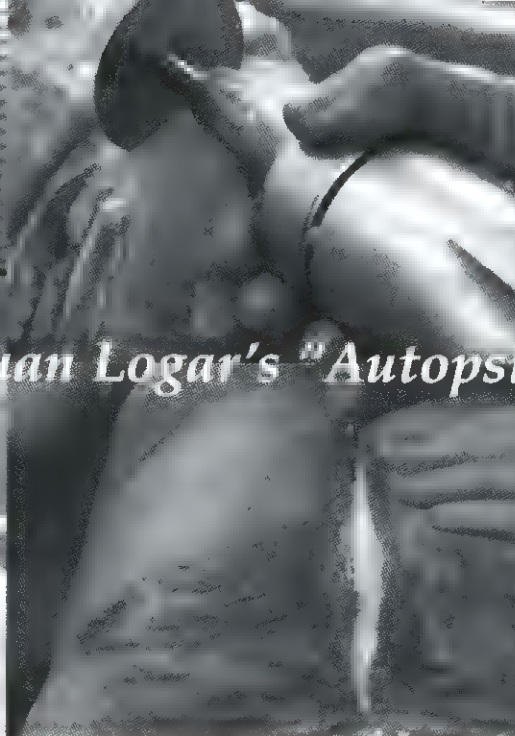
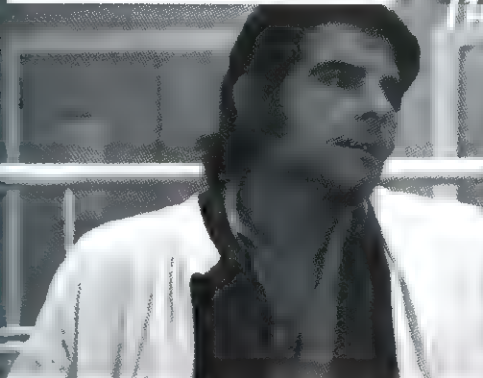
"That's why I thought of filming an autopsy."

"People want to read about love, sex - even drugs," she responds, "But an autopsy's repulsive!"

This is precisely the reaction he's seeking. Shock value for political ends. Our *agent provocateur* will make a documentary exploring the way people face, or avoid facing, the fact that they must die, culminating with film of an autopsy in progress. Perhaps by confronting people with this revolting physical reality, he enthuses, the viewer's jaded and alienated response to the suffering of others will be overcome, replaced by a heightened social conscience. The audience will come through this shock treatment with a burning desire to right the wrongs of the world!

Hmmm... It's getting quite fascinating at this point, despite the histrionic humanist angle. Structurally the film's out on it's own, utilising a combination of documentary 'realism' and hyper-real dramatics in a way designed to draw us personally into contemplation of the movie's subject - DEATH.

Now we rush through a series of 'documentary' inter views, some of which are impromptu on-the-street whilst



Juan Logar's "Autopsia"



others confront eminent people, anthropologists, theologians and sportsmen (including Argentina's premier motorcyclist of the time, Ángel Nieto, bullfighter Sebastián Palomo Linares, the poet José María Pemán, prominent Spanish TV naturalist Félix Rodríguez de la Fuente, and Emilio Romero, author of the novel *La paz empieza nunca*, filmed in 1960 by Leon Klimovsky). In each case the questions are the same. "What do you think of death?" (!) and "Have you ever thought that you too must die?" Responses range from the banal to the lunatic.

It's death, death, death all the way now: there's a power in the film from hereon that's undeniable and quite independent of the naive, humanist breast-beating that motivates the director. He's summoned the spectre but he can't really control it. We're engaged despite the clumsiness, so when we get down to the dissection of the cadaver we're primed to feel it's in some way 'personal' too! A prospect both disturbing and exciting: one's own death is, after all, one of the enduring sources of fascination in the genre.

Three new 'characters' emerge - David, his wife and brother. David makes a phone call. In the middle of the call he slumps abruptly to the floor. This scene is shot in a bizarre combination of first and third person angles - Dutch, of course. Strange, sickly and depressing music sweeps us off with his distraught relatives, who accompany him in the ambulance, screeching through the city in a mad rush. Inside the ambulance, a close-up of David as he whispers "What's wrong . . . ?"

At the hospital he sinks into a coma. It's a measure of how successfully the 'personal' slant has been introduced that these scenes are depressing and have a morbid atmosphere, even though the characters have only just been introduced.

David dies and our moral guide, Mr Guilty Conscience, obtains permission to film the autopsy which is required to ascertain the cause of death. Enter two more characters: one a stills photographer, colleague of the narrator. Short, fat, frizzy-haired, beard and glasses. He talks too much but he's not such a bad guy; later, during the autopsy, it's all too much for him and he almost vomits. Near the end of the film he's in a '70s discotheque having autopsy flashbacks and staring at his strobe lit hands, yelling "I'm alive! I'm alive!" The second new guy is a doctor (played by Jess Franco stalwart Jack Taylor), a shrewd old cove who's seen enough to gain some perspective. He has a healthy if cynical outlook - when the protagonist says "Love should be a fusion of two lives to the extent that one can't live without the other," he responds "I've never seen a body that needed two livers and two brains!"

The autopsy begins. A soundtrack mass of violins. First incision. A scalpel cut across the chest, convex from left to right, drawing a yawning mouth. Inside is a slower arc of adipose yellow sluggishly opening another lazy yawn. Astonishing. Things get pretty weird once the dissection begins. Zooming in and out of faces, the voice-over quoting Shakespeare, living perceived as dreams from which to wake is death. Wander through a forest scene where ballet dancers, writers at stern period-piece desks, jugglers even, are strewn to represent our aspiration. The doctor looks for the cause of death: "I'll know that when we enter the cranium". Entry to the brain pan is intercut with scenes of the Doc's unfaithful wife and her affair with a younger man: early '70s progressive rock breathes "*diable!*" over this.

AUTOPSIA wants to blur us into the cadaver on the slab, a spread wide-open hysteria of organs and the brain removed - "What do you think of death?" Thoughts or ghosts wandering through "*incredible capillaries of dreams.*" Here we are, still watching, as it offers us a sentimental escape - born again as life in another form, winter into spring hippy nonsense ... No thanks! The End

Juan Logar began his rather obscure directing career in 1965 with **LAS VIDAS QUE TÚ NO CONOCES**, and **EL PERFIL DE SATANÁS** in 1969. In 1970 he made **THE SECRET OF DR CHALMERS**, his only American-released film, followed in 1971 by **FIERAS SIN JAULA**. His cinematographer for the most shocking sequences of **AUTOPSIA** was José F. Aguayo Hijo, who worked on Bunuel's **TRISTANA** and shot the enjoyable Carroll Baker giallo **KNIFE OF ICE** for Umberto Lenzi.

AUTOPSIA is a quite extraordinary film. It's ambitious, disturbing and often completely out of it's gourd. It's also confused, guilt-ridden and sullied by an unhealthy amount of earnest humanistic moralising. I guess I liked it - and for the record, watched it first time on a very strong LSD microdot, from whence the majority of this review. (Don't worry - I looked again 'straight' a few days later, just to be on the safe side). Its basic premise is horribly flawed but there's still a lot to be said for its combination of formal experimentation and daffy politics. Definitely 'out there', and more or less defining the term 'curate's egg', **AUTOPSIA** is a must for anyone with a mile-wide morbid streak who's into films that blur the fictional and the real.

Stephen Thrower

BABY BLOOD
aka **THE EVIL WITHIN**
France, 1990

director: **Alain Robak**
screenplay: **Serge Cukier, Alain Robak**
director of photography: **Bernard Dechet**
editor: **Elisabeth Moulinier**
music: **Carlos Acciari**
producers: **Ariel Zietoun, Joëlle Malberg, Irène Sohm**

cast: **Emmanuelle Escourrou** (Yanka), **Jean-Francoise Gallotte** (Richard), **François Frappier** (Leopard Deliveryman), **Christian Sininger** (Lohman), **Roselyne Geslot** (Rosette), **Thierry Le Portier** (Le dompteur), **Rémy Roubakha** (taxi passenger), **Jacques Audiard** (Jogger), **Eric Averlant** (Driver).

A low-budget French gore film, in the spirit of early David Cronenberg (**SHIVERS**, **RABID**) and early Frank Henenlotter (**BASKET CASE**, **BRAIN DAMAGE**), less ferociously intellectual than the former but mercifully less misogynist than the latter. A rubber tentacle is imported to France inside an African lion and explodes forth to take up residence in the womb of Yanka (Escourrou), a gap-toothed circus girl. Pregnant and depressed, with the voice of her unnatural foetus giving her instructions, Yanka flees the circus and has a variety of sleazy adventures in down-market locales as she adopts a variety of part-time jobs from waitress to taxi-driver. She is driven, in a semi-echo of Abel Ferrara's **ANGEL OF VENGEANCE**, to kill a series of obnoxious males who cross her path, and drinks their blood to help her child develop. Finally giving birth to a normal baby who promptly transforms into a monstrosity by sloughing off its human shape, she loses the creature on a bus filled with drunken and abusive rugby players whose loutish behaviour prompts her to induce a fatal crash from which only the monster emerges.

A very black comedy which stands as a refreshingly vile alternative to the hip and wholesome **LOOK WHO'S TALKING** (1989) in the voice-over infant stakes, this suffers from a slow start and two separate dispensable prologues, but really takes off down its own twisted path when the heroine enters into her bizarre symbiotic relationship. Highly enthusiastic in its application of grotesque *grand-guignol* gore effects and pleasantly

demented in its nasty humour, **BABY BLOOD** is maybe the only French film to feature a point-of-view shot of a knife repeatedly stabbing into the crotch of a lecher's Y-fronts, an ambulance attendant being blown up and exploded with oxygen, a tentacle creature ripping apart a bus-driver's head, multiple head crushings, and a trip inside the heroine's body to peek at her beating heart. While most American splatter movies make sacrifices at the altar of misguided realism, Robak here enthusiastically embraces the rubber-and-ketchup school of ridiculousness, concentrating on achieving a weird and unsettling effect, rather than blowing the whole special effects budget on lighting a few production stills well enough to get them on the cover of *Fangoria* - then neglecting to photograph the effects properly when it comes to getting the footage for use in the film.

The circus sequence, with its moth-eaten animals and grimy cages, could be read as a tatty parody of Jean-Jacques Beineix's glitzy **ROSELYNE AND THE LIONS** (1988) and the passionate but grubby Escourrou is vaguely in the same tradition as that director's **BETTY BLUE** (1986), but Robak is notably uninterested in (or financially unable to join) the style-as-substance young French cinema typified by *bandes-dessinées* buffs Beineix, Luc Besson or Leos Carax. He neglects the Parisien poverty-chic that has typified French bizarre cinema from Franju and Godard onwards in favour of smelly provincial settings, where squalid and teeming apartments are not lit with an ethereal blue, and the brutal sex is not air-brushed into magazine lay-out glossiness. **BABY BLOOD** ends too abruptly, with the engaging Escourrou, whose committed performance anchors the wildness to a potent human story, simply killing herself on the spur of the moment, and not all of the cast are up to the demands of the darkly witty script. Nevertheless, this is a relishably grotty trifle, flamboyantly mean-spirited with a sly and sneaky Gallic trace of wit.

Kim Newman

Addendum: **BABY BLOOD** is now available on Region 0 DVD from Dragon. Extras include an English language interview with the very likeable Robak, plus a chance to see his excellent short film **CORRIDOR** (1989), in which a man runs a gauntlet of booby-trap terrors whilst out flat-hunting.



▲ bad baby or bad parenting?

▼ bad hair or bad behaviour?



BADaka **ANDY WARHOL'S BAD**

USA, 1977

director: **Jed Johnson**.writers: **George Abagnalo, Pat Hackett**.director of photography: **Alan Metzger**editors: **Franca Silvi, David McKenna**music: **Mike Bloomfield**producers: **Jeff Tornberg, Andy Warhol**

Cast: **Carroll Baker** (Mrs Aiken), **Susan Tyrrell** (Mary Aiken), **Perry King** (L.T.), **Stefania Casini** (P.G.), **Brigid Polk** (Berlin) (Estelle), **Cyrinda Foxe** (R.C.), **Charles McGregor** (Detective Hughes), **Lawrence Tierney** (O'Reilly O'Crap-Face), **Tere Tereba** (Mrs Aiken), **Susan Blond** (Baby-Killing Mother).

BAD NEWS

"I'm not saying that popular taste is bad so that what's left over from the bad taste is good: I'm saying that what's left over is probably bad, but if you can take it and make it good or at least interesting, then you're not wasting as much as you would otherwise."
 - From *A to B and Back Again*, Andy Warhol (Cassell, 1975)
"People don't know what they don't want until after they don't have to worry about it."

- Mrs Aiken, **BAD**

In the worst of all possible worlds, a farcical, misanthropic world, from which no good can come... **BAD** is unique as a film, creating a cinematic aura of satirical tragedy found, only rarely, in controversial literary works: the relentless negativity and nihilistic gaze of Celine's *Journey to the End of the Night*, the inescapable hopelessness and pointless cruelty of Selby's *Last Exit to Brooklyn*, the debauched visionary excesses of Rimbaud's *A Season in Hell*, the nightmarish entrapment of an all too human hell in Sartre's *In Camera*. Yet while most viewers' sensibilities are too offended to engage with it, **BAD** ultimately offers you a supreme affirmation: yes, life really is that **BAD**.

BAD REVIEWS

"Is it time to ban dangerous junk like this? Never in all my years of film reviewing have I come across such a revolting, nauseating, deplorable film. Although I have never been an advocate of stricter

film censorship this film could alter my views. It is rubbish - dangerous rubbish." - **DAILY MIRROR** (18/2/77)

"A compellingly revolting experience. Reduces its audience to the sleaziest trash imaginable." - **VARIETY** (30/3/77)

"A DESPICABLE, nasty film." - **DAILY MAIL** (18/2/77)

"'Bad' is an aptly titled movie. Rotten would be a better word." - **N.Y. DAILY NEWS**

"Revolted, consummately repulsive picture." - **SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE**

"Depraved. There's only one way to see this stuff as fun. And that's to have a lot of anger or hate or nihilistic despair that makes you see life through a grotesque prism." - **NEWSDAY** (5/6/77)

"Crude, repulsive and utterly obscene. There's really no excuse for any of it." - **HOLLYWOOD REPORTER** (28/3/77)

"Gives even the most guilt-ridden something to feel morally superior about." - **ROLLING STONE** (16/6/77)

No one had a good word for **BAD**. It's the most universally hated and berated film this writer has discovered - which instantly elevates its appeal! From tabloid reviewers, to high-art critics, to radical hip-theorists, it provoked hyperbolic, vitriolic fury: everyone thought **BAD** was **BAD**! So what makes **BAD** so **BAD**?

BAD MOVIE

A middle-aged blond strides purposefully into a New York corner-shop. Ignoring customers and staff, she locks herself in the toilet, stuffs reams of bog roll down the loo and flushes, blocking the pipe and causing water to overflow onto the floor. Then she stridently exits the premises, vandalising the shop displays she passes under the stunned gaze of the purveyor. She walks around the corner and strolls into the 1970s Kitschen/diner of a suburban house. Enter Mrs Aiken (Carroll Baker) immaculately made-up, wearing hairnet and housecoat. She pretends to exchange polite platitudes, but beneath the formality is a sarcastic tone of bitchiness and one-upmanship. Aiken answers the phone to discuss a business arrangement with a client, and then she phones someone to do the job. Cut to LT clutching onto the rear-outside bumper of a bus, hitching a free ride. He leaps off and enters the corner shop, winding up the busy salesman and shoplifting sweets, before heading off to the house. Mrs Aiken answers the door, confronting LT and immediately establishing her authority. LT attempts to talk his way inside explaining that CC has

sent him for a job. Aiken feigns surprise and tells LT that she only employs women and wasn't expecting a man (this is a lie, she had already been told to expect him). Throughout the plot, Aiken goes out of her way to be relentlessly mean and nasty to everyone. Having badgered his way past the intrepid guard, LT produces some Polaroid snap-shots of bloody, mangled corpses. These are the victims of his previous successful jobs. Aiken is positively ecstatic about the photos and lovingly scrutinises them.

When the phone rings, it's Aiken's client and she confidently passes the receiver to LT for direct instructions. *"It's sort of retarded, they call it autistic - just consider it euthanasia."* The caller promises to contact LT soon, with further instructions. Aiken is reluctant to let LT stay in the house; she explains that both her mother and daughter-in-law (plus baby) reside there, as do some of her girl-workers. As well as running this hostel for wayward girls, Mrs Aiken operates a beauty electrolysis business on the premises. Eventually the hostess is persuaded to allow the male guest to stay, but only provided he agrees to an extortionate rent agreement and draconian house rules. *"I've got a lot of overheads,"* she stresses, while showing LT to his room. (The interaction between Mrs Aiken and LT is the pivotal relationship in the film, encompassing: mother/son, mistress/servant, boss/worker, order/chaos.) Left alone, LT snoops around the pad, suspiciously, meeting Aiken's ageing mother and informing her he is recently released from an FBI witness relocation programme. Downstairs, LT is miffed when Aiken handles a call for another job, which she immediately farms out elsewhere, ignoring LT.

Following Aiken's instructions, a girl meets the new clients, a battleaxe of a girl who does all the talking and her one-armed husband, the latter described as, *"so fucking passive."* They explain that an *"illegal alien on welfare"* had pushed the husband under a tube train, hence his absent arm; they want revenge and tell the girl the culprit works in a garage. At home, Aiken talks to a couple of charmingly ill-behaved young girls. They're phoning from some guy's bedroom after a *ménage-a trois*. A New York street at night; a girl sneaks into a garage, where a mechanic fixes a car. Victim is knocked-out and his legs pulled under a raised car-ramp. The girl cuts off one of his fingers, wraps it carefully in her handbag and switches ramp to descend, brutally mangling his legs. She snaps a Polaroid and departs. Back at the house, Mrs Aiken treats her husband to

electrolysis while nagging him. Then she turns on LT who's lounging on the sofa. Unable to miss a bitching opportunity, she switches off the TV and suggests he makes use of his own room. She answers another phone call, from a sleazy, fat, black cop/detective who demands she set up one of her workers for him to arrest. Meanwhile, the garage assassin meets her clients in a bar. After a petty argument over the victim's injuries, payment is exchanged for the photo. Wife shows picture to husband. *"Now be honest, it does make you feel better."* *"Yes!"*

The cop shows up at the Aiken house and continues to intimidate the hostess for an arrest victim. Mrs Aiken stalls the cop, when LT intrudes. Picking-up on Aiken's predicament, he rants at the baffled cop. Sent by Aiken, the girl duo from the earlier threesome visits Estelle (Brigid Polk) an obese dyke. Polk recites the story of her neighbour from hell, whom she apparently lip-read insulting her in a local bar, saying, *"I can't wait until summer's over because old bags look so bad in shorts"*. For this crime, Estelle will pay the girls to kill his dog, and *"kill it viciously. It can't be something painless or ouch-less"*. She's been observing his activities through binoculars from her apartment window and points him out to the girls - *"He'll be wearing the same blue pants he's worn for two years. I've thought about it a lot. The only way to deal with him is kill his dog. I think it's the only thing he really cares about. I'd kill it myself but I don't want to get into it"*. She continues: *"People stink. They all do. All they want to do is eat, fuck and watch TV"*. One girl replies, *"I know, the more you smell, the more they stink!"* Polk regards her suspiciously for a moment and then belches loudly. *"I got a lot of gas - my doctor says I'm an air swallower"*.

With this multiple diegesis established and characters introduced, the plot develops. Aside from her other cash-grabbing schemes, entrepreneur Mrs Aiken manages a sort of escort agency from her home, with a distinguished and discerning clientele. But instead of providing sexual services, her network of girls comprises vicious killers, hired to assassinate or torture victims for cash. In particular the agency specialises in despatching handicapped babies and children, unwanted by their mean and otherwise successful parents. All the employees comport themselves with ruthless, professional and detached sadism. Everyone continuously bitches and deprecates everyone else, except LT who is just dumb and self-deluded enough to believe his streetwise charm will bring him through unscathed (thus he's a willing victim).

BAD MOMENTS

Mrs Aiken's daughter Mary (Susan Tyrrell) is a neurotic mess, irredeemably on the verge of a total breakdown, as she drags her rug-rat around and raves on erratically against the immorality of her peer group. In one episode she ventures out to see a movie with the girl duo. One of them gets bored during the film and starts a fire in the cinema toilet. The trio make a hasty departure from the burning building and after an altercation Mary is left behind, stranded in a dangerous part of town. After a long walk back through the roughest neighborhoods, Mary finally arrives home. LT glances at her distressed mug and asks, "*Bad movie?*" Next day the girls titter at the TV news report of the cinema inferno that killed all inside. One witness comments that it's lucky it was only a foreign art movie, or the audience would have been bigger! Another memorable Tyrrell moment finds her changing her baby, holding aloft the soiled nappy - "*Phhheew!*" - for the camera.

Undoubtedly the most fabulous scene in **BAD**, strangely maligned by critics, occurs in a New York skyscraper (recalling Warhol's film **EMPIRE**). Inside a high-rise apartment, a mother shouts down the phone at her husband, while glancing at her screaming baby. She has arranged a visit from the agency, but her husband is angry about the cost. "*You do it*", he bellows. Suddenly she overcomes her trepidation, grabs the brat and hurls it out the window. Cut to an aerial shot of the baby descending through mid-air. It smashes onto the pavement, splattering blood over alarmed passers-by. As a crowd gathers around its mangled body, a dog laps-up the blood (Buñuel style) and a passing mother bellows at her child, "*That's what will happen to you if you don't keep quiet!*"

As things spiral towards an inescapably **BAD** conclusion, two characters waste their time by attempting to do good; acts of redemption. Mary tries to warn a father of the impending fate awaiting his baby. But she accosts the wrong person. Meanwhile LT attempts to honour his contract by killing a handicapped boy. After confronting the child, he is struck by remorse and throws the kid at his parents, challenging them to commit the murder. But in leaving this unwanted and severely mentally handicapped child at the mercy of his uncaring parents, this existential act appears cowardly and pointless.

After scolding LT for failing, Mrs Aiken is left alone in the kitchen. The cop, still chasing an arrest, confronts

her. (To her credit, Aiken has made no attempt to set up any of her assassins for arrest and exhibits no intention of doing so, which becomes her downfall.) A row ensues and the cop ruthlessly drowns Mrs Aiken in a sink full of scummy washing-up water. Tyrrell enters the scene, dropping her baby and staring in disbelief as the cop removes incriminating evidence of his presence and exits into the night.

ANDY WARHOL is **BAD**

Filmed in New York during 1976, Andy Warhol's **BAD** cost \$1.2 million to make - the biggest budget of any Warhol movie. Initially Robert Stigwood was financing the project, but he dropped out; so Warhol largely financed the film himself, with assistance from Fred Hughes and Vincent Fremont. Warhol personally invested all his earnings from the previous six months of portrait production. At its inception, **BAD** was supposed to be a low budget affair even by Factory standards. Released in April 1977, it bombed at the box office, with many of Warhol's entourage losing their investment; Warhol personally lost about \$400,000. It was the last Warhol or Factory film.

BAD VIBES

BAD is the only film directed by Jed Johnson, Warhol's boyfriend at the time. Born in Sacramento, he was employed by the Factory in 1968 (following the move to 33, Union Square West). Johnson was assistant director and editor on seven Paul Morrissey films. Andy and Jed became estranged from each other following the film's release. Johnson took the film's failure personally and retreated into his alternative career as an interior designer (decorating Yves St Laurent's new apartment in the Pierre Hotel). Jed commented on his ailing relationship with Andy: "*It was always difficult because he didn't know what he wanted from other people. He wanted you to be successful but, on the other hand, he wanted you to be dependent. Success would have meant independence, so there were always contradictions*".

BAD ACTING

Carroll Baker's starring role was specifically scripted for her and she returned to the US after living in

Europe for seven years making *giallo* films for Umberto Lenzi. Prior credits include **BABY DOLL** and **HARLOW**. She had been a household name in the US, as a veteran of popular TV soap opera. In **BAD** she's a stark parody of her previous roles, Anne Robinson's mother-from-hell! A tough, petit-bourgeois Queens housewife and electrolysis beautician, running an all-girl hit squad on the side. Mrs Aiken is clean-n-mean, domineering, vain, sadistic, ruthless, sarcastic, arrogant and aspirant. Perry King was Warhol's choice for male lead LT. He's vain and resembles a young, all-American hustler/rebel in jeans and leather jacket, with loser and victim oozing from every pore. Childlike in his naivety, believing he controls his own destiny, the role recalls those of Joe Dallesandro in the Morrissey films (ie: **FLESH, TRASH, HEAT**). Susan Tyrrell co-stars as the matriarch's daughter-in-law, Mary Aiken, abandoned housewife and neurotic mother. As in her later roles in Paul Verhoeven's **FLESH AND BLOOD**, and the cult slasher **BUTCHER, BAKER, NIGHTMARE MAKER**, Tyrrell renders a remarkable screen presence; a *tour-de-force* of expressionist acting. Always confused, miserable and obsequious, she hangs around the house, precariously clutching her screaming baby. She moans at everyone about everything, but does nothing. When she finally attempts to act for the greater good, she fails miserably and is left to wallow in pathetic self-despair. Brigid Polk returns to the Factory fold after a two-year absence. As Estelle, her presence brings to this cameo role the illusion of a bigger part (in every sense). She plays an ageing, embittered and obese New York dyke, who's easily offended and has a furious temper. Other notable performances include Geraldine Smith (Glenda), Maria Smith (Marsha), Cyrinda Foxe (RC), Stefania Casini (PG), Charles McGregor (Detective) and Susan Blond (as the mother who chucks her baby out the window).

BAD PRODUCTION

Pat Hackett wrote the screenplay with George Abagnalo. Dialogue is cutting, witty and real; the story undermines the heterosexual family, with women playing dominant/male roles in the absence of men. John Waters' cult midnight movie **PINK FLAMINGOS** was a discernible influence on **BAD**. Jeff Tornberg produced Mike Bloomfield composed the music. Franca Silvi and

David McKenna were editors. The film runs for 105 minutes, shot on 35mm over an eight-week schedule. The production crew numbered 30 to 40 people, Screen Actors Guild members on union-scale wages. This contrasts with all prior Warhol productions. Andy referred to **BAD** as a serious comedy. During production, Warhol was on the set almost every working day. While working with Jed, Pat and the actors, Warhol frequently took various acquaintances to the set, utilising the potential prestige to further his other business/art projects. (At the time, Warhol was trying to engineer a strong comeback onto the New York art scene, having kept a low profile since he was shot. One of his associates was the acclaimed portrait painter, Jamie Wyeth. They were painting each other's portraits, after winning a lucrative joint commission from the Manhattan Coe-Kerr gallery.)

BAD KARMA

After its review at Plitts Century Plaza, Los Angeles on 24th March 1977, **BAD** opened in New York around the same time as the Studio 54 discotheque and closed after a disastrous three-week run. Although Warhol's previous productions were low budget underground films, they had all made a profit on his name. **BAD** was Warhol's first (and last) flop. The US distribution deal with New World Films was a complete shambles, with conflicting interests demanding or rejecting further cuts, and few outlets prepared to advertise it. Money was trickling in from European rentals, but even in Europe the film was besieged by problems. Distributors in Italy refused to pay their second rental instalment for **BAD**, challenging the producers to fight it in an Italian court. In Germany **BAD** was confiscated and banned from distribution for excessive violence. Andy even cancelled a planned trip to Germany for fear of being arrested. Vincent Fremont recalls: "It was so difficult to get a film made. There were so many people out to try and stab you in the back. By this time **BAD** was giving us grief on all fronts."

Fred Hughes came to the rescue, having negotiated a business art deal for Warhol to produce a series of six portraits of leading sports personalities, with a spin-off print run (*Athletes*). This million-dollar project finally enabled Warhol to recoup some of his losses from **BAD**. Vincent Fremont says: "Andy never made another movie. That was it. He lost a lot of money. It caused problems with our friends,

they lost money. It hurt a lot. It was the first time he ever lost out of pocket money and the last time. We had a lot of bills and to pay that money off at that time was a lot of stress, though it didn't shut us down."

BAD TIMING

According to Victor Bockris in *The Life and Death of Andy Warhol* (Fourth Estate, 1998) **BAD** was ahead of its time, released in a period of public optimism and NY disco euphoria. A year later, it would have caught the fashionable American Post-Punk/New Wave scene and received a different reception.

BAD TRIP

In the Warhol canon, **BAD** shifts from the experimental to the conventional, losing primitive formalism and non-narrative, diegetic time experimentation. But like Paul Morrissey's productions, it develops Warhol-esque concerns. It opens with the light and amusing ambience of realism usually associated with TV soap operas, while dispensing dozens of clues without allowing the audience to piece together the full sinister ramifications of what's going on. So it's all the more shocking when the rupture suddenly occurs with the maiming of the first victim (car mechanic). This graphically violent sequence ushers in a darker, sleazier depravity, as the full horrific picture gains clarity. You feel uncomfortable with this unexpected turn and the detached severity of the violence depicted. Like other Warhol films, **BAD** abounds with drug references potentiating the ultimate **BAD** trip (most obviously when Mother Aiken chucks son LT's pills down the toilet, while reprimanding him). Background TV news items sensationalise tragedies, echoing Warhol's early 'accident and execution' prints. In alluding to the suburban family, **BAD** suggests the sacrificial rites of passage undergone by every child, subdued and coerced into conformity to the Law. **BAD** also revivifies the Warhol themes of deconstructing glamour, beauty and stardom, and the public's fascination with these; likewise, the countenance, composure and honesty (or otherwise) of acting is pondered. Instead of real people playing roles, professional actresses play ordinary people. The real world is a stage upon which everyone is acting and each mask is torn away revealing another.

BAD BLOOD

Sexual role reversals between male and female are integral to the film's effect. Women, acting traditionally male personas, play key roles. This provoked a lot of feminist criticism and accusations of misogyny. Many of Warhol's feminist critics were expressing their solidarity with Valerie Solanas, whose SCUM manifesto was then in vogue. It was Solanas who emptied her revolver into Warhol's chest, almost killing him. But the ability of women to equal men in everything - even **BAD**-ness and violence, would be better received by today's post-feminism.

BAD THEORY

From the plethora of potential interpretations, the Mildred Pierce psychoanalytic model seems as relevant as any. Mrs Aiken as the hard working and long-suffering mother and wife, struggling to raise and protect her children from her brutal (though thankfully largely absent) husband/father/cop: the Law of the patriarch. She does her best to teach her children self-sufficiency in a cruel world. Her husband/father/cop demands one of their children as a sacrifice, but she creates a subterfuge. Finally the angry and violent patriarch comes home, punishing her for transgressing the Law. Order is restored.

Analogy brings the film closer to its source. Mrs Aiken offers beautician services to the social misfits who work for her. Utilising the sexual role reversal model (common in theatre, ie: Tennessee Williams) Aiken is a persona of Andy Warhol, running the show in the Factory. She's vain and bitchy enough, and has all the financial contacts necessary to keep her reprobates in work. She is miserly, turned-on by photos of carnage, and maintains her own luxurious space, exclusive of the group. This is the **BAD** side of Warhol, in auto-critique. Adorno says, "Every crime is an uncommitted work of art".

"So I was shot at my place of business: Andy Warhol Enterprises. At that point, in 1968, Andy Warhol Enterprises consisted of a few people who worked for me on a fairly regular basis, a lot of what you might call freelancers who worked on specific projects, and a lot of superstars or hyperstars or whatever you call the people who are very talented, but whose talents are hard to define and almost impossible to market." - (From *A to B and Back Again*, Andy Warhol).

Mrs Aiken is also a study of the sadistic personality. At her most blatant, she scatters broken glass on the floor knowing that LT has bare feet, then tricks him into the room, puncturing his foot. "*See what happens when fools rush in*", she gleefully remarks. She conforms to the classic, psychoanalytical construct, anally retentive, obsessed with power and control, respectful of cleanliness and order, meticulous with planning and personal appearance, regarding everyone else as a threat and object to be manipulated, obsequious to her own banal moral values. The refusal of the camera to offer a moral perspective is not condoning immorality, but reflects moral ambivalence. Bored ambivalence towards a reactionary and emotive world is central to Warhol's philosophy.

BAD reveals none of the formalistic creative hallmarks of Warhol's earlier films yet his financial commitment, intimate relationship with Jed Johnson and time spent on the set, amount to the most curiously anonymous Factory production. No other artist has been so important in questioning authenticity and the centrality of the artist. There's something charmingly Existentialist about **BAD**. It unreservedly offers Hegel's hypothesis that civilization develops through struggle between two adversaries, each demanding recognition from the other. Only one can triumph while the other must fight to the death, or submit to the other's mastery. Or Sartre's inescapable paradox, that an individual cannot willingly do **BAD** because to do so one must believe that **BAD** is good. By the same law of reversibility, committed attempts to do good will result in **BAD**. **BAD** has been compared to **ENTERTAINING MR SLOANE**, but **WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF?** also comes to mind. It looks forward to Mike Leigh's productions, particularly **ABIGAIL'S PARTY** and **NAKED**. This is a film that was undoubtedly calculated to shock, disgust and provoke its audience. Despite conforming in every way to the mainstream conventions of film production, the final product remains totally unacceptable, successfully alienating its audience. In this it is ultimately radical. **BAD** depicts a perspective of the world as it is now, everything on the surface. Its a cruel and uncaring world, a negative totality, a war of each against all. This is late capitalist, consumer-driven society, ruthlessly defined by competitive struggle for money and material wealth. Sadism, paranoia and suspicion are endemic; lying, greed and hypocrisy are the prevalent morality. Too **BAD** really!

Chris Barber

THE BEAST IN HEAT

aka **HORRIFYING EXPERIMENTS OF S.S. LAST DAYS** (sic)/ **LA BESTIA IN CALORE/ SS EXPERIMENT PART 2/ SS HELL CAMP/ HOLOCAUSTE NAZI**
Italy, 1977

director: **Ivan Katansky** [Paolo Solvay aka Luigi Batzella]
screenplay: **Lorenzo Artale, Luigi Batzella**
director of photography: **Ugo Brunelli**
editor: **Paolo Solvay** [Luigi Batzella]
music: **Giuliano Sorgini**
producer: **Xiro Papas**

cast: **Macha Magall** (Dr Ellen Kratsch), **John Braun** [Brad Harris] (Don Lorenzo), **Kim Gatti** (Drago, Krast's assistant), **Sal Boris** [Salvatore Baccaro] (The Beast), **Xiro Papas**, **Alfredo Rizzo** (resistance fighter), **Brigitte Skay** (local tart).

Like Marino Girolami's **ZOMBIE HOLOCAUST**, this is a disjointed, out-of-whack mess, two completely different films haphazardly spliced together. In this case, a ropey 'partisans vs Nazis' war movie bristling with nobodies trying to pass themselves off as Charles Bronson, Richard Chamberlain and the like, is punctuated by new scenes depicting the regally fiendish Macha Magall strutting around a grubby little torture chamber, firing off priceless rounds of dialogue whilst a fat hairy mongoloid in a cage rapes and murders a series of naked women. The result is a hysterically tasteless piece of garbage which veers between dull stupidity and absurd misogyny, leavened by the Nazis' maniacal good cheer as they devise ways of dragging information out of the boring locals.

From the very beginning we're assailed by an atmosphere of sickness. The sparse credits arraign a handful of suspects over a seemingly never-ending shot of a swastika picked out on a dark background - whole Reichs come and go before the director's name finally curtails the experience. Blood-curdling electronically-treated music turns this single-minded flaunting of the most hated symbol of the 20th Century into something approaching a mesmeric experience. 'Have you fully appreciated the beauty that is fascism?', it seems to be asking...

As exploitation diehards may already have guessed, the duff war movie footage - pulled from Batzella's 1970 effort **WHEN THE BELL RINGS** - hogs more than half of the running time, but the whole thing perks up considerably

when the Nazis arrive. Macha Magall as the evil Dr Kratsch commands the screen whenever she appears, although thanks must also be given to her counterpart in the dubbing studio, a spiteful English bitch whose only concession to a German accent is to pronounce swine as 'svine'. Magall, a waspish, malignant-looking woman flanked by two star-struck lesbian 'assistants' ("*You're a genius, you're wonderful Dr Kratsch*"), easily overcomes the objections of The Guilt Ridden Doctor and revels in her latest bizarre experiment, brilliantly lacking in the slightest practical value: the creation of a murderous sexual mutant "*who would make the god Eros green with envy.*" A naked female victim is comforted with the words "*I only want you to experience a moment of intense pleasure!*" before being thrown in a cage with the eponymous troll. What follows is an acting display by Sal Boris as the Beast to rank alongside the most abandoned in cinema history, and that's just for starters - at this stage, as Macha promises us over stock footage of German tanks rolling into Poland - "*the fun's just beginning!*"

The variety of tortures in evidence is pretty high, but concentrated into three main sequences, so judicious use of the fast-forward button may be required. Be careful not to miss anything though, as amongst such delights as rape, baby shooting, brutal injections and the flagellation of naked fatties (producer Xiro Papas, anyone?) are a number of scenes which truly boggle the imagination...

Take for instance the nude, spread-eagled woman with crocodile-clips on her vagina leading to a hand-cranked electricity generator... or the trussed up victim being eaten alive by enraged guinea pigs... or the moment when the Beast breaks off from raping one of the chosen virgins to pull out large handfuls of her abundant pubic hair - notable for both the raw, bloody patches left between the victims' legs (a truly pathological image) and the fact that he then *eats* the ripped out pubes... Add to this cinematic first the scene where a woman having her finger-nails pulled out interrupts her screams with the lucidly spoken phrase "*You're hurting me!*" and you'll have some idea of the subhuman depths to which Luigi Batzella sinks. Those of us with a taste for the subhuman depths will of course approve wholeheartedly of his determination to bring us such treasures. And to think this actually got a UK video release...

Stephen Thrower

THE BELL OF HELL
aka **LA CAMPANA DEL INFIERNO**
Spain 1973

director/producer: **Claudio Guerin Hill**
screenplay: **Santiago Moncada**
director of photography: **Manuel Rojas**
editor: **Magdalena Pulido**
music: **Adolfo Waitzman**
Completed after the director's death by **Juan Bardem**

cast: **Renaud Verley** (John), **Viveca Lindfors** (Marta), **Alfredo Mayo** (Pedro), **Maribel Martín** (Esther), **Nuria Gimeno** (Teresa), **Christine Betzner** (Maria), **Saturno Cerra**, **Nicole Vesperini**, **Erasmo Pascual**, **Susana Latour**.

John (Verley) is being released from the asylum. He is on probation for a few months until his case comes up for reconsideration. He gets on his bike and roars off behind the blood-red credits. As we sit back and wait for the mayhem we get our first surprise. Apart from the credits saying it's a Spanish/French co-production, a tramp who must have accidentally wandered off a Fulci set talks of "*fig trees uprooted from their graves*", "*bones snatched from a bitch in heat*", and warns us "*the dead will rise*" as we cut to shots of a lorry taking a huge bell to the local church. Then back to the motorcycle. Children sing "*Freres-Jacques*" on the soundtrack as John arrives at a dark, brooding and deserted house. He flicks through a photograph album of happy childhood days presented like a Garden of Eden before the Fall, and then stares out at the rain.

These contradictory opening images pre-figure the dual nature of a film that combines elements of the atmospheric Spanish and Italian films of the sixties with the gore, nudity and sado-masochism of the late seventies. Caught, you might say, between the demise of Hammer and the rise of the Cannibals. But what really pulls you in is the oppressive Gothic atmosphere and strong plot which, like the opening, constantly has you guessing.

John wants revenge. He was committed to the asylum by his wheel-chair bound aunt (Lindfors), as a way of beating him to the inheritance left after his unmarried mother's suicide. The aunt, possibly with the help of her three nubile daughters, naturally wants him re-admitted. While she bribes the doctor, he gets a job in a slaughterhouse, giving you everything you have come to expect from

such scenes, and begins to construct one in his cellar. When he has learnt enough he leaves and moves on to playing nasty practical jokes on people.

Little is as it seems in what is essentially a claustrophobic, incestuous family story. There are brilliantly lit yet shadowy interiors in rich tonal colours. Visual symbolism abounds, with subtle nuances and ambiguity pervading everywhere amidst a web of repressed sexuality. Half-formed questions receive only half-formed answers, and finally Poe's Raven in the form of a crow squawks and Aunt and the girls are invited into John's specially prepared home.

There is great attention to detail. When John forces himself on the most repressed of the sisters the scene is shot through blood-red roses. A film of childhood carefully matching the action plays in the background. The film runs out, not when she loses her virginity, but as she begins to enjoy it; a touch of unconscious Catholicism. This is a film that rises above its parts because its parts are done so well - there isn't a scene that hasn't been carefully thought out.

The girls end up nude, hanging by their hands from meat hooks. The aunt, her face sprayed with suitable attractant, is left near the family beehives. John prepares to apply the skills he has learnt in the slaughter-house and then things begin to go wrong, and twist follows twist to the finale.

And the bell? Well, it does come into it and not just because Claudio Guerin-Hill died on the last day of shooting by falling from the bell-tower. One of the characters is used as a counterweight for it, the rope around the neck, naturally. Not exactly central to the plot, but they liked occult titles in 1973. Definitely recommended.

Charlie Philipps

LA BELLE NOISEUSE

France, 1991

director: **Jacques Rivette**

screenplay: **Rivette, Pascal Bonitzer, Christine Laurent**

Freely based on the story *Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu*

by **Honoré de Balzac**

director of photography: **William Lubtchansky**

editor: **Nicole Lubtchansky**

music: **Igor Stravinsky**

producer: **Martine Marignac**

cast: **Michel Piccoli** (Frenhofer), **Jane Birkin** (Liz), **Emmanuelle Béart** (Marianne), **David Bursztein** (Nicolas), **Marianne Denicourt** (Julienne), **Gilles Arbona** (Porbus), **Marie Belluc** (Magali), **Bernard Dufour** (Hand of Painter).

LA BELLE NOISEUSE is the film that brought a further public to Jacques Rivette in his home country, if not abroad, though aficionados of French cinema from the Nouvelle Vague onwards will know him as a key filmmaker alongside others like Godard, Truffaut, Rohmer, Chabrol – brothers from the *Cahiers du Cinéma* stable of critics who became cinéastes.

LA BELLE NOISEUSE essentially revolves around an artist who is having a fallow period, virtually a creative block, unable to work convincingly since he abandoned his intended 'masterpiece' some years earlier. As a result of fortuitous circumstances he is encouraged to resume his quest to accomplish his masterpiece with the inspiration of a young woman who walks into his environment. That simple storyline is the frame for a film about the process of painting and its repercussions on those involved.

Marianne, the young woman who triggers the attempt to make this new work, is not a willing model, initially. After a conversation between the master painter, Frenhofer, the art dealer, Porbus, and the young painter, Nicolas, the latter offers his partner, Marianne, as model to the older artist – acting as a pimp, unbeknown to her. The idea of prostitution is part of the original story by Balzac, the inspiration for the film, a story set in the early 17th Century in which the model is a courtesan, someone who sells her body to the painter, usually for more than posing. (Only in a later version of the story did Balzac change his title from *La Belle Noiseuse* to *The Unknown Masterpiece* and drop the word courtesan from the text to remove ambiguities to aspects of the narrative that he wanted to emphasize.) By sticking to the original Balzac title, Rivette, and his scriptwriters, reveal their intention to maintain various ideas of prostitution in art practice as a premise for the film. By doing so they also set as contrast a playful opening scene for the young couple at the hotel, acting out a pick up before a couple of drab English guests taking afternoon refreshments. This sexual game in itself is also a further contrast to Marianne and Frenhofer when they begin their own relationship as model and artist at work on the 'classic nude' representational process.

There are many issues at stake in the film, others too that weave through Rivette's considerable *oeuvre*. What I



▲ SLAUGHTER HOTEL
LA BELLE NOISEUSE ▶
▼ THE BELL OF HELL



will briefly touch upon revolves around the idea of painting as subject matter for a film, or, more particularly, the approach as demonstrated here, the creative process as drama itself. Painting as a subject is not uncommon, but usually centres on the biography of a famous artist, and when we see (or stare at, more appropriately) the model posing, it is probably to add some spice (particularly if nudity is involved), often of an exploitative nature. With **LA BELLE NOISEUSE** this idea would reduce its seriousness to misuse and misreading, given that for a considerable length of the film's four hours, Marianne is naked before the painter as they (she as much as he, as this is a collaborative work, in a profound sense) struggle to create the painting that Frenhofer feels is within his/their grasp. Thus, for considerable stretches of time we watch the actual painting process in operation.

How are we to watch this process without falling asleep, or toppling into boredom? Undoubtedly there are some for whom this sentiment sums up their attitude towards the film, but if the film is to succeed, as it seems to have done (just to take cinema attendance figures as well as its Cannes accolade, the Grand Prix, followed by others internationally, as indications), the film has to portray the art of making films at the same time as portraying the art of making paintings.

Marianne's initial reaction to being "sold" by her lover to the older artist is one of anger and unspoken refusal. Yet next morning she keeps the appointment, ostensibly as a form of retaliation against her lover, though other reasons are probably at play deep within. The idea of being naked before another man's gaze, as she believes the role of the model has to be, is far from appealing to her. How will this older artist handle the situation once they are alone in the studio? Nothing seems to go the way we might imagine, or indeed she might imagine, or perhaps even the way the older experienced artist would be expected to handle such a strategy. We watch the process at length, the fully clothed poses, the fumbling for a focus and concentration as the artist scratches with pen and ink on the paper, the model resisting to be drawn (pun intended), both displaying nervousness. It becomes a slow process. It is carried out in silence, or rather, there is no conversation or chit chat between the two protagonists. The only sound is the heightened noise of the scratching pen on paper, and the pages of the drawing book being turned. We watch the hand drawing, the hand of the real artist, Bernard Dufour, who

creates all the drawings and paintings and offers 'technical advice' to the filming process. One piece of advice that Dufour suggested was his own method of working, which Michel Piccoli as Frenhofer took on board. Thus the model and artist do not converse, not only with words, but with their eyes too. The model looks at the artist, but she must not 'stare' at him. We become rivetted (no pun intended). Rivette has a way of making exceedingly long films and holding our attention. Never before does it appear that someone has captured the intensity of an artist at work. The detailed showing of the process of creation succeeds because of the silence, the lack of conversation. Or indeed music, whether in the studio to act as distraction to artist and/or model, or on the soundtrack to absorb our time and space. We have no distraction to hook onto, particularly in the important early stages of the drawing process. We are allowed to draw with the artist, we are allowed to reflect as we wish, not to be forced into a particular line of thought that words or music would encourage. This is a constraint contrary to Balzac, as Bonitzer notes in his role as co-dialogist. As support I could point out that elsewhere there is footage of a film about Giacometti which shows 'rushes' of him at work moulding the clay in his studio. It is followed by the edited version, with added music, and intercut with the finished work, as if the process of sculpting was too tedious to warrant our attention, or that we should be allowed space to think for ourselves.

Ironically, in an age when television and computers have reduced our attention span, Rivette is daring to show us the process at length. We watch the hand that draws. We look at the model being drawn. We look at the artist looking at her, then drawing again. We think, we exist. After a while, Frenhofer indicates that Marianne disrobe, and we move into the first stages of the nude drawings and paintings.

Emmanuelle Béart (Marianne) said later that as the film was shot in sequential order, and thus she knew from the outset what the general outline of the story held in store (the actual dialogues and developments were written day by day), and that she would be spending three weeks naked mostly in a studio with just a handful of people, that she started to become distressed as the moment of disrobing approached: "so the first time I took the dressing gown off I was shaking like the character." She had told Rivette at an early meeting, over dinner, when he approached the subject of nudity, that it wouldn't be a problem. She had decided contrary to her 'no nudity' stance because she knew the film

had "no false aesthetics", but was to be a real search around the state of nudity, where "*I wanted to show* (the nude as raw state), the naked body outside of poses of conventional aesthetics, arms dangling in the first nude scene, for example..." (my italics). An idea that scared her somewhat. "The nude as a raw block, which gradually takes shapes (...) To show nakedness without any sexual emotions, in order to discourage voyeurism, but by being looked at, scrutinized."

But that didn't discount the idea that she was shy, it wasn't a natural step for her to make. Nor for Rivette, also shy in such matters. Indeed, Rivette said in an interview that it was a prerequisite of the film (on whose part?, it sounds like Rivette's) that there would be no close-ups of Béart's naked body. As a consequence, for some days while the earlier scenes were being filmed, Béart was tensing herself for the impending heart of the film, tightening the knot within her body, as is all too clear. At one point she says directly as they go towards the studio at the painter's château, to step inside his church (Marianne's words) on the first night, that she feels something strange is happening. It might sound like feminine intuition, but it is more. While it is not an uncommon device in a Rivette film to inform us of the house of fiction we are entering, (**CELINE AND JULIE GO BOATING** has that sense of something strange happening right from the off, as indeed does this film in other ways) this time it seems rooted in Béart's own experience and feelings, even if eventually scripted by others.

The naked woman is placed before us, whether the lover, the wife, the model, the whore. We all dream them, fantasize them, see them increasingly in magazines, newspapers, television, billboards, everywhere. We leer, we are seduced. (I take as read the reverse, woman with man, or man with man, woman with woman. In other words, I choose from my own sexual preference.) No matter if we think sexuality has no role in this film, it does. It is about that before all else. But how to handle it? Whether on a set with others around, a full crew, or a minimal one. Or alone in a room, as Dufour was with Béart, to draw, paint and photograph her.

We can all have that situation, that potential to handle, control or ruin. What does one do? I have filmed and photographed in such situations. I have run the gamut of feelings, uses, misuses. Perhaps only now do I feel that I would handle it better, perhaps now I feel relaxed with the idea. But that's as a mature man (arguably). What of the

model, who by design is more than likely going to be young, for the sexual lure might not be there with an older woman, whether for the director, actor...or audience, especially the audience, for the lure of the young body undoubtedly controls the market forces? In many cases the younger woman might not be able to handle it, will run through the range of uses and abuses being made of her body by others, will not have personal control of the situation. Béart was twenty-five at the time of filming **LA BELLE NOISEUSE**. She was experiencing all the problems. Despite her trust in Dufour, whom she knew had experience in nude painting, and Piccoli her opposite actor (rather than opposing actor), who was the true professional and never overstepped the mark, it was the director, Rivette, who was responsible for the handling of delicacies, whom she had to trust above all. She noted that he knew when to approach her, and what to say. The first time she was naked, after the take and she had withdrawn into a corner to isolate herself and find some solitude, she said she felt very ill, humiliated, right at the edge, as if she wanted to disappear. Rivette came to her, found her hidden away and said that she was very beautiful, a reassurance of what they were doing, which was just what she needed to hear. She noted too that Piccoli worked professionally, only playing his part. He always turned away immediately the take was done. He knew it had to be Rivette who was the one to be closer. Piccoli kept his role exactly as shown in the film, there was no further dialogue between them than what we see. Béart felt that was part of the reason it worked. The only view Béart did not dare to contemplate during filming was the position of the spectator of the finished film.

During the process of filming she was also posing for the real artist, Bernard Dufour, in a room set aside as his studio, where she posed for him to draw, paint, and be photographed, as Dufour often works from photographs. She felt that there was more seduction in those situations, for he painted her for real, "that my body had inspired something." Ironical in a sense, given that Rivette was painting her on film and was another seducer, even if the results were not available for viewing immediately to enable her to respond after each session. What she probably meant was that with Dufour it was a one on one situation, more like an intimate seduction, rather than the filming process which had a number of people lined up before her, all with their hands in the seduction process, even if Rivette was the prime seducer.

Once they are beyond the question of nudity, other issues come into play, whether in the film itself, or in the real process of making the film. We watch as Marianne is drawn into becoming a willing model, then into thinking about herself. She has alternating waves of annoyance and complicity as she shifts her positions around, (her mental positions as much as her modelling positions), her relationship with all those involved in the film (let alone in the film making process). It had all started with nervous steps for both of them. She was not to know that Frenhofer was scared of her, or indeed of the whole process, even though he mentioned it. We endure/enjoy the fumbblings, the gestures of the painter, hesitations, mistakes, stains, blots... his approach to figure drawing, starting with the head, and then the body from a vertical line, establishing a plumb from which to draw. We view the pose, then the drawing of it. Then we move to watching the drawing, with the pose following. Once we are into nude drawing and painting, we don't have to watch the complete process. The shots are continually trimmed so we can shift through the day more quickly, join in the search for the object of the painting. Frenhofer goes beyond the notion of the body, his attempt is to capture a whole life in a painting, to expose all, to capture the essence of life, perhaps in a look, perhaps in himself (discarded self-portraits lie around) via the other, the model, to bare the soul, as we often term it, that something else that is to become the painting. When Marianne understands that too, then she becomes part of that search. She takes over when she sees him slacking and searches for the pose herself, attempts to impose. This came partly from Béart herself, her own feelings of being a beautiful "pain in the arse" as the title suggests, but it was the role required. Later, she referred to her development of the nude as occurring in four stages: reticence, abandon, revolt and creation. At one point Rivette told her that it wasn't the film they had thought they would make. But it was, of course, for that is the structure within which he works, allowing for improvisation and development, but within bounds that are set by those who have the skill to improvise. It is more than to know how to improvise, you have to know to improvise. Béart had to become a rebel on the set itself, as in the film, for it to find the right dynamics.

And then we understand (realize, for we knew it already) that Liz, the artist's wife, was the original model for the abandoned work. And, as if to reflect the tussle going on, instead of taking a fresh canvas at the crucial

point, Frenhofer places the old painting on the easel and sets about painting over it with Marianne, leaving only the former model's head poking out. It is as if the replacement of Liz by Marianne is a replacement not with a lover or muse, but with a daughter. We have to put it this way because we realize that the issue whereby a model is often the wife, lover, whore, or one lined up for seduction by the artist are part of this painter's background too. But Marianne is never threatened by this sexual predicament, she is never propositioned by Frenhofer. Only in the first sketches does he show inclinations towards sexual interest before turning away, other issues being more central. Although, as indicated, there is a sense of seduction (acknowledged by Béart) from Dufour, and Rivette, and the camera, of course. At one point she even stays the night, but it's for the opposite reason, she's tired and in revolt, venting her anger on Liz. The question of whether she is an erotic object is not part of Frenhofer's apparent intention. Is she offended? There are many questions that can be asked. Each viewer has perhaps to ask questions that the film doesn't seem to ask. Or doesn't want to answer directly. Each of those involved in the film process, whether on the screen, or behind the camera, is asking their own questions. And because they are not all voiced, but take the shape of the filming itself, the nature of filming and editing, or the nature of glances and movements, body actions, we have to use our own judgements as to their meanings. This is perhaps why we feel so involved in the film. We all edit our own film from the material we wish to focus on for ourselves. Its simplicity has evolved a complexity and richness.

Towards the end of the film we discover that Marianne herself was already another substitute, in that by becoming Nicolas's lover, she was fighting his incestuous relationship with his sister. That gives another perspective on her role as the Belle Noiseuse in the narrative of the film. The word, *noiseuse*, in **LA BELLE NOISEUSE**, as explained in the film, derives from the word noise, and means a woman who's argumentative, seeks a quarrel, 'a pain in the ass'. Marianne reveals that she knows not only the Balzac text and its references, but also the current use of *noiseuse* in Quebecois slang. It is perhaps this knowledge that adds to her decision to pursue the challenge of the modelling assignment. It is clear Marianne has become the noiseuse to her lover, Nicolas, as well as to Frenhofer, and to the filming process too. But 'La Belle Noiseuse' was the initial title for the

painting that Frenhofer had been making with his wife, Liz, as model. She too was the *noiseuse*, their relationship at such a point that he abandoned the painting and stuck their life in a kind of purgatory, or living hell, for ten years, even though he talks about 'happiness' almost in the same breath

Does Frenhofer produce the masterpiece? The very idea seems crazy. One can aspire to produce a masterpiece, but there is no guarantee of attainment, as Frenhofer found out ten years previous. Any idea of only wanting to produce that seems alien to art practice to me. One works, one aspires, one reaches, perhaps one attains. One knows that if one achieves perfection then that is the end. (Until the following day?!) These are notions of art that many artists live with. In this film, to resolve his situation in terms of life and art, life with his wife, life with his art and the art world, Frenhofer creates the painting (which we never see – thus negating any outsider response that it can be termed a masterpiece), and then promptly withdraws it, only Marianne officially seeing and being appalled by it, though his wife Liz steals into the studio and sees it too, marking it with a small black cross on its back afterwards. Why? To signify that his attainment of his masterpiece is also the death of their relationship. It certainly becomes a convenient device, for Frenhofer notices the mark, and thus knows Liz has seen the painting. Though not before he has made his decision to bury the painting anyway. That it is a cross has a further significance in terms of the crucifixion and what follows, namely, that Frenhofer covers the painting and bricks it into the wall. Given that the use of the horizontal bar of a bench and the pose of the crucifixion is a dominant image towards the end of the sessions, one can't help but feel that the painting is not being buried for ever, but rather that it is only a matter of time before the wall is broken down and the painting resurrected. Frenhofer hedges this bet by taking into his confidence the young girl, Magali, the daughter of the cook, to help him brick in the painting, leaving her to hopefully reveal its existence, and whereabouts, later, even going to the point of telling her not to reveal it. Resurrection is the right word, for earlier Frenhofer talks about a respected and dead colleague who made two or three good paintings, one of them titled 'Resurrection'.

With nothing to show, Frenhofer sets about painting through the night to produce another painting, a replacement, that he unveils to everyone not as his masterpiece, 'La

Belle Noiseuse', but as his first posthumous work. Though he never says, or never denies, that this replacement might be 'La Belle Noiseuse'. Nor does the term 'posthumous' seem to spark any reactions from the others gathered.

There seems to be an idea that this final presented work is a fraud. In one sense Frenhofer is being deceptive, but the painting itself does not necessarily follow as a fraud itself, in the same way the other can be called a masterpiece by anyone with certainty. (We have yet to claim for this film that anything one calls a masterpiece is a masterpiece, like anything one names art is art. We will leave such discussion aside. Likewise today's demeaning of terminology like perfect, superstar and masterpiece, their casual usage reducing them to a meaninglessness.) Many artists, writers or others will often produce a work out of nowhere after an intense period of working, as if the assimilation of ideas and material is within them, and flows just as soon as constraints are lifted. That does not make them second-rate products. Many famous poems have come about from moments when suddenly "the pen flows". Sections in books, plays, or paintings and other creations have often come about from a sudden change in the tensions, or the pressure to perform. I avoid the use of the word 'inspiration' too, which tends to take away from the hard work that has preceded the sudden flow.

Any suggestion that the others (besides the three females in the know) should notice the painting as a fraud, or anything less than the intended masterpiece, is ingenuous. One viewing of a painting is not enough to offer damning judgements, not with the delicate situations those here find themselves in. Upon reflection in the coda, Nicolas does show dissent at the painting. In one way he is the only one whose opinion matters when it comes to art itself. It is much the same as writing and commenting on films seen once on the screen. Further viewings are usually helpful. Today with video access a real bonus for study is at hand.

There seems little real problem with storing work away, whether bricked up, or relegated to a drawer. Most serious artists are quite prepared to take this action if they feel some sense of betrayal, or misunderstanding, or rejection by the prevailing system. It is not new. The fact of doing the art itself is enough, becoming public, anything further, seems to be more than one bargains for.

The work that is buried, the supposed masterpiece, the real 'La Belle Noiseuse', is not seen by us. What is the image? It is probably a standing pose, head looking back

over the shoulder, with a twisted and awkward hand gesture. We never see any of this canvas actually being painted. All we see is a glimpse as it is bricked into the alcove, its covering sheet accidentally lifted at the base to reveal a predominance of red. We have seen red before in the paintings, as a means of erasure, a cross in red made across the former 'Belle Noiseuse' (the second abandoned version), yet not a total erasure, but a crossing out that allows the image still to be seen, almost as used in some contemporary (Derridian) discourse. We presume that this second version is no longer existent, that the final work buried in the wall is a three-layered work, the sum of the three attempts. We have to recall too that Frenhofer notoriously stated, infuriating Marianne, that his best work had blood on the canvas, as did 'La Belle Noiseuse' (the first abandoned version). So it is no surprise that red is glimpsed. But it was an abundance of red. We had also glimpsed a red cloth on the floor in what we must imagine as the supposed final pose. Has this red become a pool of blood, or is it still a cloth, or...? Red is also used at the head of the film. Our first sighting of Marianne is in a bright red top. Before she changes out of it we see her lying arms outstretched, crucified on the bedspread in their hotel room, after their sexual play act for the English guests, though noticeably a play act, not anything that is consummated. Crucified with a sigh of relief as she rests back on the bed in the heat. Another relevant red crops up when the catalyst, the chemist of the operation, the mastermind for this masterpiece, Porbus, the dealer, arrives on the scene in a red car. We would think nothing of it if Liz didn't ask him whether he came in his blue car, only to be informed that he arrived in his new red car, which she then notes signifies danger, wondering if it is him who is dangerous. We answer that for ourselves at each of his appearances, his role as manipulator of this occasion, and his earlier role as Liz's lover, in fact his relationship with everyone except Marianne, whom he uses as his pawn, clearly shows him as one of the leeches of the art world, a necessary part of the machine.

Perhaps Frenhofer buried his painting not only to resolve the relationship with his wife, and to get Porbus, as her ex-lover and his dealer, off his back, for Porbus will purchase the finished painting, but also to push Marianne away from Nicolas, to free him to produce art, and to free her to gain a life. It is a kindness (even a loving gesture) by the older artist to the younger generation, not to let history repeat

itself, more specifically to save Marianne and not to constrict her like he constricted Liz. After all, Nicolas has his sister, who seems resigned to be subservient to him and his art.

This conclusion appears to derive from Frenhofer's first remarks in the studio, for no sooner has he met the young couple, than he challenges them, as if to drive them both away. They stand their ground. He persists. He asks embarrassing questions over a meal. The solution taken, or that develops in the process of his days in the studio with Marianne, is to present by example a means to make her decide whether she wants her own life, or to play second fiddle to Nicolas's art. From the moment of the revelation, when she sees the final version of *La Belle Noiseuse*, until the end of the film, she refuses to speak to Frenhofer again, though she does smile in a flighty way as she passes him on the lawn. Her only comment is to his wife, when she tells her that she feels sorry for Frenhofer. Frenhofer himself appears not unduly worried, he has probably succeeded in setting her free. Her voice-over at the start and finish of the film, the voice-over of a recounted story, indicates as much.

Frenhofer has to decide if life or art is to come first. Hence he creates the painting, in pursuit of a truth, then lets Marianne see it, as if to confirm its success. His task done, he has no intention of destroying his masterpiece, nor has he any intention of destroying his life with his wife, so he hides it for long enough for those involved in its creation to move forward. Nicolas sees the (replacement) painting as a game. Frenhofer wants him to feel less than pleased, a spur to drive Nicolas forward in his own art. On the face of it for Nicolas, Frenhofer has pulled back, taken his own advice and not taken the ultimate risk, instead helping another who can, namely, him, Nicolas, a proposition that Frenhofer had suggested during an earlier discussion. Frenhofer has played his options. He believes 'La Belle Noiseuse' bricked in the wall is the end, his final work. Anything further is nothing but a game to be played in the art world – though who knows, the perfect work is not the perfect work the next day. His first posthumous work might be the start of new sights and insights. For now, he has taken steps to satisfy all, and to achieve a life with Liz who had thought it was finished, who had not expected him to conceal the painting (or destroy it, she is not to know until a future time when she goes through the studio in search of a painting with her cross on its back). All has been stabilised for their love. He has surprised her. He has been clever on that front.

Marianne's future has been changed. She sees herself captured for real in the painting, captured in her coldness, as she tells the non-comprehending sister. So cold, in fact, that she doesn't want Nicolas to see her exposed, her real side. When she sees the replacement painting she knows that Frenhofer has saved her, saved himself perhaps, but has betrayed art, chosen life over art. She feels gutted once again – and readies herself to wear a mask to the world. As in a horror movie she has come face to face with death. How can she live after that? She had been warned by Liz not to look at the final work. She had not understood until it was too late. She feels saddened and betrayed, as she sees it, because though she went the whole way, and Frenhofer made the image, which appalls her, not in itself (because the girl Magali on seeing the painting comments that she looks beautiful), but because of what it reveals of her within, the essence of her being – probably manifest in a deep coldness in her eyes, if the final pose we witnessed was anything to go by. She is thus appalled that he has replaced it, betrayed his art. If she was to sacrifice herself, crucify herself, then at least she wanted the painting to exist in the world. She is not to know that he has not destroyed the painting, that it is buried, to be resurrected at a future date when all the present problems and issues are long passed.

But does she believe it is destroyed? Nicolas tells her to prepare to return to Paris, asks if she wants to drive back the long way, perhaps visit Barcelona, or Montserrat. Montserrat? Where does this come from all of a sudden? Investigation shows Montserrat as a place of pilgrimage in Northern Spain, a place where a famous Virgin and Child statue, allegedly carved by St Luke, was hidden away for eight hundred years in a cave during the Moorish occupation. Does Nicolas know of the burial? Or Marianne? This seems too loaded a sign not to suggest a trace of suspicion.

In a way the various threads towards an ending, the cleverness of Frenhofer, in other words of Rivette, make this film something of a masterpiece in itself. Rivette has succeeded admirably in making a work that is substantial and offers real thoughts on the nature of art and the risks taken by those who embark on the life of being as an artist.

Paul Buck

BLADE OF THE RIPPER

aka **LO STRANO VIZIO DELLA SIGNORA WARD / THE STRANGE VICE OF MADAME WARD / NEXT!**

Italy / Spain, 1970

director: **Sergio Martino**

screenplay: **Eduardo Maria Brochero, Ernesto Gastaldi, Vittorio Caronia**

director of photography: **Emilio Foriscot**

editor: **Eugenio Alabiso**

music: **Nora Orlandi**

producers: **Luciano Martino, Antonio Crescenzi**

cast: **George Hilton** (George Corro), **Edwige Fenech** (Julie Ward), **Cristina [Conchita] Airolidi** (Carol Baxa), **Manuel Gil** (Neal), **Alberto De Mendoza** (Neil Ward), **Ivan Rassimov** (Jean), **Bruno Corazzari** (assailant), **Carlo Alighiero, Marella Corbi, Miguel Del Castillo**.

In Vienna, a slasher takes his razor to blondes in the shower while Julie Ward (Fenech), wife of an American diplomat (De Mendoza), suffers guilt pangs because news of the murders triggers not entirely unpleasant memories of her lengthy sado-masochist relationship with an animal-loving weirdo (Rassimov). At a party where high society girls cat-fight, Fenech is introduced by her peppy blonde best friend (Airolidi) to a long-lost cousin (Hilton) who has turned up to share an inheritance and they begin an affair. Between dream sequences and slow-motion fantasies, Fenech is pestered by mystery notes that come with bouquets of flowers, hinting that the killer is closing in on her. Rassimov is still bitter about their break-up: *"The only thing I cannot bear is indifference. Your best emotion is violent raging hatred. Love is nothing compared to that."* When Airolidi is murdered in the park while sleuthing and Rassimov seems to commit suicide in the bath, Fenech takes a well-earned Spanish holiday with Hulton, apparently in the vicinity of Sitges, but the murderousness is not at an end.

Unlike Argento, whose *gialli* are mostly puzzles explored by alienated male detectives, Martino works in the Hollywood lady-in-peril psycho tradition, constructing a vehicle for Edwige Fenech (note how her character is foregrounded by the original title and excluded from the English retitlings) just as **GASLIGHT**, **UNDERCURRENT**, **THE SPIRAL STAIRCASE**, **MIDNIGHT LACE** and **WAIT**

UNTIL DARK are vehicles for Ingrid Bergman, Katharine Hepburn, Dorothy McGuire, Doris Day and Audrey Hepburn. Writhing in guilty perversion or a-tremble as the plot grinds around her, Fenech is the whole show, and gets to wear a succession of designer mini-frocks between deaths. All other characters are her stooges: the cast list is divided into bubble-headed women who get killed (when Fenech is shocked at another murder, soon-to-be-victim Airolti callously quips "*we should be grateful, he's eliminating all our competition*") and swarthy men conspiring against her.

It's as hard to judge the quality of **BLADE OF THE RIPPER** from the \$2.88 Woolworths tape (on the Greatest Film Classics label) available in the US as it would be to gauge the worth of a painting by a scrap of surviving canvas or a novel by a few chapters. Evidently a widescreen production with lavish photography and some visual flair, it comes out as a greenish, grotty experience with the telecine pointed at the centre of the frame, so that it's impossible actually to read the threatening notes sent to Julie (one is a rough draft for the title of a later Martino horror: 'Your vice is like a door locked from the inside and only I have the key'). Most scenes play out through too-close close-ups that cut off heads and bodies at random, a visual look coincidentally but oddly like Peter Watkins's **EDVARD MUNCH**. However it's still an oddly fascinating exercise in cynical nastiness if not quite the masterpiece Mark Ashworth tagged it as in the original incarnation of *Shivers*.

In the twisted finale, Hilton kills Rassimov, whom he has paid to murder Fenech with a neat if old-fashioned mystery trick involving an ice cube propped under a latch to simulate a locked-room suicide, then hooks up with De Mendoza, who is the one who bumped off Airolti. In a **STRANGERS ON A TRAIN** riff, it turns out each has committed a murder the other has a motive for: De Mendoza getting rid of an unfaithful wife while Hilton loses a co-heir ("*the best time to get rid of anyone is when there's a maniac on the loose*"). As the conspirators drive away, they pass a hitch-hiking Fenech and, panicked, drive off the road to perish in a car wreck. It turns out that the police have conveniently noticed Airolti was not killed by the slasher and have revived Fenech but pretended she was dead to clear up the case. "*I am grateful that you saved my life,*" Fenech muses, "*but I still feel dead*".

Kim Newman

BLOOD DELIRIUM
aka **DELIRIO DI SANGUE**
Italy, 1988

director: **Sergio Bergonzelli**
screenplay: **Sergio Bergonzelli, Raffaele Mertes**
director of photography: **Marce de Stefano**
music: **Nello Ciangherotti**
producer: **Raffaella Mertes**

cast: **John Phillip Law** (the Artist), **Gordon Mitchell** (the Butler), **Brigitte Christensen** (the Wife/young musician), **Marco Di Stefano, Olinka Hardiman** (Corinne) **Lucia Prato**.

This is the sort of lively, messy pulp horror movie, spotlighting nudity and dismemberment with an almost Franco-esque glee, they used to make in those carefree days of the early '80s, back when celluloid was cheaper than ketchup, and there were still territories in the world begging for the likes of **THE OTHER HELL** or **BLOODY MOON**.

A castle-dwelling mad artist (Law), who believes he is the reincarnation of Van Gogh, is obsessed with his dead wife (Christensen), to the extent of wiring her corpse to the piano in the hope of reviving his flagging artistic inspiration - an experiment which proves singularly lacking as she tends to fall over, getting our bearded hero overly worked up. Coming across a young musician (also Christensen) who is the image of his wife, he imports her into his home and tries to get her to reincarnate the dead woman, **VERTIGO**-style, with lots of carpet chewing.

Meanwhile, Law's butler (Mitchell), who was earlier caught molesting the wife's corpse, is abusing the local women, and dismembering the victims with a handsaw. Discovering his servant's crimes, Law also realises that blood is the medium in which he can paint sunsets best, and is prepared to sanction the murders to continue his work. Finally, the heroine's helicopter pilot boyfriend and the ghost of the wife, represented by three glowing balls, intervene and the castle falls down, although not before Law's Van Gogh obsession has been purged when the ghost cuts off his ear.

A catalogue of sleazy subjects, re-using bits of Freda's **TERROR OF DR. HICHCOCK** and H.G. Lewis's **COLOR ME BLOOD RED**, with Law and Mitchell enthusiastically showing off their ranting insanity and relishing the oppor-

tunity to slobber over starlets. The finale seems to come out of nowhere, along with the helicopter and the ghost, and is decidedly skimmed, the producers merely having the funds to set off some smoke pots around their borrowed castle and have a few stage flats fall over in a weedy inferno. Unmissable, especially for fans of stripped-to-the-waist, 60-to-70-year-old Mitchell and disposable continental starlets who scream and shout during dummy-quarterming sequences.

Kim Newman

CANNIBAL APOCALYPSE

aka **APOCALYPSE DOMANI / CANNIBALS IN THE STREETS / INVASION OF THE FLESH HUNTERS**
Italy, 1980

director: **Anthony M. Dawson** [Antonio Margheriti]
screenplay: **Jimmy Gould** [Dardano Sacchetti], **Antonio Margheriti**

director of photography: **Fernando Arribas**

editor: **Giorgio Serrallonga**

music: **Alexander Blonksteiner**

producers: **Maurizio & Sandro Amati**

cast: **John Saxon** (Norman Hopper), **John Morghen** [Giovanni Lombardo Radice] (Charlie Bukowski), **Tony King** (Tommy Thompson), **Elizabeth Turner** (Jane Hopper), **Cinzia De Carolis** (Mary), **May Heatherly** (Helen), **Wallace Wilkinson** (Lieutenant Hill), **Ramiro Oliveros** (Doctor Mendez), **John Geroson**, **Ronnie Sanders**.

Ideally this fast and furious cannibal outing would turn up on late night TV slots in place of such cathode carcinomas as *The Equalizer*. Margheriti's direction, although at times slack with exposition, is surprisingly energetic during the numerous scenes of overdriven violence, and support is at hand from a soundtrack which exudes a brisk, funky-*Kojak* sleaziness from the sublimely named Alexander Blonksteiner. The elderly veteran of stylish 60's Gothics like **THE LONG HAIR OF DEATH** and **CASTLE OF BLOOD** may have abandoned his ersatz-Bava stylings for this movie, but with the script cockily pick-n' mixing themes from U.S. and Italian horror successes (with a confidence no doubt bolstered by fellow countryman Lucio Fulci's then

recent hit **ZOMBIE FLESH-EATERS**), and lots of lovely Giannetto De Rossi gore on offer, the shadows and tracking shots are scarcely to be missed.

This slant on urban menace exploits the city-scape panic that Romero's **DAWN OF THE DEAD** curtails after just half an hour. Horror movie carnage in urban locales can deliver a jolting, anarchic thrill, even in such deliriously silly films as Umberto Lenzi's zombie runaround, **NIGHTMARE CITY**. By comparison, Romero's giant shopping mall, already over-run, is characteristic of its' director's fatalism, and trades chiefly in melancholia - an emotional undercurrent also to be found in another of **CANNIBAL APOCALYPSE**'s influences, David Cronenberg's **RABID**. But whereas **RABID**'s emotional maturity is evident in the way the lead character's 'responsibility' comes home to roost in her tragic destruction, **CANNIBAL APOCALYPSE**'s climax is muddled with the soap opera stand-by of marital infidelity. There is a melancholia evident in Margheriti's film, indicating that more than just a superficial commercial meal has been made of its sources; but engagement occurs most with the gruesome vignettes, where destructive revelry is used as colourful digression from the traumas of the unhappy leads (much like the early novels of James Herbert).

Untypically for an Italian gore flick, it's the performances which really stick in the mind here. With his strength and underlying sadness John Saxon makes a compelling lead, bringing a restrained, thoughtful quality to a role that could have been flat and conventional. Consequently, John Morghen's showier turn as the psychotic ex-soldier can sit more plausibly alongside Saxon's measured presence. Black actor Tony King also stands out here - his alarming homicidal rages are vividly conveyed by cameraman Fernando Arribas during the prolonged scenes of Cronenbergish pulp at the sanatorium. The fourth member of the Cannibal alliance, May Heatherly, adds her own brand of manic pragmatism to a character included mainly, I suspect, to remind audiences of **DAWN OF THE DEAD**'s Fran.

The weird sense of cannibal camaraderie that develops between the quartet is one of **CANNIBAL APOCALYPSE**'s most striking features. Alliance between the four leads may be uneasily flawed by misogyny but it nevertheless reshuffles the **DAWN OF THE DEAD** pack in an interesting way. Instead of hordes of flesh-eating monsters attacking a quartet of beleaguered humans, Dardano Sacchetti's lively script has four flesh-eating humans on the run from a hostile, unsympathetic society.

As a splice between the urban zombie flick and the cannibal gut-munchers of Deodato and Lenzi, the film certainly has its merits. However, by dispensing with Romero's 'zombies as metaphor' **CANNIBAL APOCALYPSE** ultimately falls a little short - it could have done with some of the ambition of Romero's allegory or even the nihilism of Ruggero Deodato's **CANNIBAL HOLOCAUST**. *The Aurum Horror Encyclopedia* berates Margheriti for being content with churning out "just another action picture" and although that's too harsh, it's not totally wide of the mark. Playful with its genre sources, well-paced and exciting, Margheriti's film combines gore and action dynamics with a scale of expository ambition unfortunately derived from cheap TV. If Margheriti had played more daringly on the 'bite' that Saxon gives his sexually precocious jailbait neighbour, or had the quartet of flesh-eaters tried to exploit news journalism, radio or television to reveal their plight, he might have had a more complex action film. But compared with the efforts of his schlocky contemporaries - Bruno Mattei's **ZOMBIE CREEPING FLESH**, or Umberto Lenzi's **CANNIBAL FERROX** for instance - his mere 'action' film shows a laudable commitment to mutating its influences.

Stephen Thrower

Addendum: Antonio Margheriti died of a heart attack on November 4th 2002, at the age of 72. **CANNIBAL APOCALYPSE** is available on a beautiful DVD from Image Entertainment's 'Euroshock' Collection. His wonderful 1960s Gothic horror **CASTLE OF BLOOD** is available in a restored full-length version from Synapse.

THE CASE OF THE BLOODY IRIS
aka **PERCHE' QUELLE STRANE GOCCE DI SANGUE**
SUE CORPO DI JENNIFER?/EROTIC BLUE
Italy, 1972

director: **Anthony Ascott** [Giuliano Carnimeo]
screenplay: **Ernesto Gastaldi**
director of photography: **Stelvio Massi**
editor: **Eugenio Alabiso**
music: **Bruno Nicolai**
producer: **Luciano Martino**

cast: **Edwige Fenech** (Jennifer Osterman), **George Hilton** (Andrea Antinori), **Paola Quattrini** (Marilyn), **Giampiero Albertini** (Inspector Eri), **Annabella Incontrera** (Sheena Isaacs), **Franco Agostini** (Redi, Eri's assistant), **Oreste Lionello** (Arthur), **Carla Brait** (Mizar Harrington), **Ben Carra** (Adam, Jennifer's husband), **George [Jorge] Rigaud** (Sheena's father).

Obviously hoping to cash in on the success of Dario Argento's early *gialli*, Carnimeo - here hiding behind his usual pseudonym - presents a camped-up concoction of mascara and murder, laced with a piquant hint of group sex and enough dubious motivations to give Phil Hardy a cardiac arrest. Containing more red herrings than a John West canning plant, **CASE OF THE BLOODY IRIS** is an excellent example of a sleazy shocker trying to hedge its commercial bets with a glossy veneer of soft-core exploitation. The presence of Fenech - my favourite actress and the real First Lady of Italian cinema - is undoubtedly intended as bait for the dirty-raincoat brigade, and Carnimeo makes thorough use of every opportunity to rip off her sweater and put that famous bosom on display. In fact, when Border Films gave this a British release in the early seventies, they attempted to push the sex angle even further by retitling it **EROTIC BLUE!**

Gastaldi's tortuously over-plotted screenplay kicks off with a young woman having her throat slashed in the lift of a modern tower block. Glamorous black stripper Mizar Harrington (Brait) discovers the body and is later found trussed and drowned in her bath-tub. Desperate for somewhere to live, two models - Jennifer (Fenech) and Marilyn (Quattrini) - move into Mizar's apartment after becoming friendly with the building's architect and manager, Andrea Antinori (Hilton). Investigating the killings, Inspector Eri (Albertini) regards Andrea as the number one suspect and has put him under surveillance. Jennifer, meanwhile, is being menaced by Adam, her former 'husband' in a bizarre communal marriage, now pathologically jealous of her attraction to Andrea. Molested in her bedroom by a masked intruder, Jennifer seeks refuge with a neighbour - beautiful lesbian Sheena Isaacs (Incontrera) - and when the girls return to explore the flat they find Adam's corpse in one of the cupboards. Andrea goes into hiding after Marilyn is stabbed in the street, and Jennifer comes to suspect that her other neighbour - the elderly Mrs Moss (Mancini) - is hiding someone in her apartment.

Breaking in, she encounters the old woman's hideously disfigured and aggressive son, David; but when the police arrive to search the place he is nowhere to be found, and Mrs Moss infers that Jennifer must be crazy. After an attempted meeting with Andrea, Jennifer and Sheena are trapped in the sub-basement of the tower block by a malfunctioning lift. Sheena meets a horrible end when someone releases a jet of steam from the central heating pipes, and the police give chase to a man who turns out to be Andrea. However, back in her apartment Jennifer is confronted by Sheena's father - a professor of the violin. He admits to killing the girls in disgust at their supposed involvement in his daughter's lesbian activities. He is also responsible for the murder of David Moss, his intention being to make him look like the killer. After throwing David's body from the twentieth floor landing, he is about to dispose of Jennifer the same way when Andrea arrives and manages to save her. In the ensuing struggle, the professor is thrown to his death. An unnecessary 'twist' ending repeats the action of the picture's opening frames, with an attractive young girl making an enigmatic phonecall to a husky voiced woman...

Blatantly designed for maximum cheap thrills, the film is riddled with ridiculous coincidences and glaring inconsistencies. For example, despite being harrassed by a masked killer, a group sex pervert and a deformed maniac, Jennifer does not feel the need to vacate the apartment, but merely flashes her knockers during numerous outfit changes and applies ever more 'Rimmel' to her already spectacularly made-up eyes; which at least diverts attention from the contrived set of circumstances which allows all the building's weirdos to inhabit a single floor! But thankfully, faults like these do not prevent the film from being highly watchable, and Carnimeo's direction displays enough brash confidence to keep everything together. As he has demonstrated in Spaghetti westerns like **GUNMAN IN TOWN**, he has a strong flair for action, and the horrific set-pieces and frantic chases are well handled and excitingly paced. Ably assisted by Massi, an excellent cameraman who went on to direct features himself, the director successfully imbues the trendy seventies interiors with a claustrophobic sense of menace. The music from Nicolai - Ennio Morricone's regular conductor - is also extremely effective, making liberal use of motifs from his work for Sergio Martino and Jesus Franco.

Anyone with fond memories of Fenech as Madame Bovary in **PLAY THE GAME OR LEAVE THE BED**, or as

the bisexual hippy Floriana in **EXCITE ME / GENTLY BEFORE SHE DIES**, will not be disappointed with her performance as Jennifer. Although a voluptuous figure was probably the prime requisite for the part, Edwige manages to display an emotional range as varied and elaborate as her hip boutique wardrobe. Sensibly, Carnimeo has seen fit once again to team her with the excruciatingly handsome Hilton, and the combination is as sexually dynamic as it was in the fabulous **NEXT! / THE STRANGE VICE OF MADAME WARD**. The rest of the cast all lend highly competent support, with Quattrini being particularly engaging as the vivacious Marilyn. The ever-dependable Incontrera also deserves a special mention, not least because her icy feline beauty is ideally suited to her part as the predatory lesbian! No doubt certain critics (you know who I mean!) would make heavy weather of the reasoning behind the professor's murderous actions, and carp on endlessly about the film-makers' 'nauseatingly macho anxieties about lesbianism'. It can safely be assumed, however, that the Sapphic subtext is introduced solely as one more exploitable element in the film's catalogue of risqué titillation. If Italian directors and screenwriters really did harbour pathological feelings towards dykes, half the actresses in Rome would never work again! **CASE OF THE BLOODY IRIS** is simply a well-crafted, deliciously unpleasant thriller, which pulls no punches about its brazenly commercial nature. Even the ornate title is taken from a throwaway line delivered by the Inspector, and the whole thing is as wonderfully disposable as the ultra-violent comic-books Mrs Moss buys for her monstrous son! An undisputable classic, in other words...

Mark Ashworth

CHAOS PERVERS

West Germany, 1982

Producers / directors: **Mike Luis and Charlie Onrop**.

A kind of demented sequel to **EXCESSE DE SADE**, featuring the same actors under different names (which matters little, as they're all doubtless pseudonyms - consider the second director's surname...). What we have here is something more than the regular menu of filth. Even by German standards, **CHAOS PERVERS** is pretty heavy shit (!), concerning the fortunes of a bored libertine who moves

pretty quickly down the slippery slope to rock bottom human scum behaviour. Our man turns up drunk at a party, humiliating the entire assembly by pissing on everyone and everything in sight. An incredibly ugly, bloated hag is singled out and has a whole cucumber inserted into her yawning chasm. Food is thrown all over her. Endless orgies ensue, the hardest of fuck/suck scenes given that the context isn't violent S&M, until a massive (fake?!) scat scene provides the highlight of the 'movie.' The next thing you know, the degenerate turns up in a fag/slag bar dressed in black leather chaps and blockhead leather gear ranting and raving - sort of a Kurtz porno speech - whilst an acid-type flashback takes place, showing the libertine hurling handfuls of shit at all and sundry, and smearing the stuff everywhere.

The nihilistic hate rant continues, including a bout of Russian roulette, as the libertine, now dressed in a German helmet, mounts a bike - cue Hitler speech, wild music and Angerbore photographic references. The slob rides off into the gloomy distance and the viewer drops dead....

I've always been a fan of genuinely gratuitous vileness, and this artefact is ideal viewing for all those 'swinging couple' assholes and wishy-washy 'libertarians' who think they've seen it all. Though not quite in the 'Videodrome' transmission line of **EXCESSE DE SADE** (far more entertaining, in fact), and totally lacking in merit or even vaguely defensible 'qualities', **CHAOS PERVERS** is one of life's great turn-offs. I defy anyone to experience anything other than revulsion as this nasty little number unfolds. Repellant, sick and misanthropic, **CHAOS PERVERS** achieves a level of disgust that most movies can't even approach.

Stefan Jaworzyn

COLD-BLOODED BEAST

aka **ASYLUM EROTICA/SLAUGHTER HOTEL/LA BESTIA UCCIDE A SANGUE FREDDO**
Italy, 1971

director: **Fernando Di Leo**

screenplay: **Fernando Di Leo, Nino Latido**

director of photography: **Franco Villa**

editor: **Amedeo Giamini**

music: **Silvano Spadoccino**

producers: **Armando Novelli, Tizio Longo**

cast: **Klaus Kinski** (Dr Francis Clay), **Margaret Lee** (Cheryl), **Rosalba Neri** (Anne), **Monica Strebelt**, **Jane Garret** (agoraphobic lesbian), **John Karlsen**, **Gioia Desideri**, **John Ely** (gardener), **Fernando Cerulli** (chauffeur), **Sandro Rossi**.

This murder mystery set in an isolated psychiatric facility must surely be one of the most inept 'thrillers' ever conceived. Seeming as if directed by someone on the verge of sleep, **COLD-BLOODED BEAST** charts the agonisingly slow movements of yet another black-caped, masked killer who occasionally hacks women to death, for reasons even the scriptwriters found hard to fathom. Four chillingly tedious murders occur before anyone alerts the police, most of the nursing staff preferring instead to play endless games of croquet with the patients (and, although I'm not familiar with the rules of the game, four people hysterically attacking a single ball simultaneously can't be right...).

A synopsis is just about impossible because, having introduced a new inmate at the beginning, the narrative just stops. Instead we get a series of tortuous 'build-ups' as the murderer aimlessly prowls the asylum before selecting a weapon from the wide range of medieval axes, swords and cudgels unaccountably dotted around the place. Aeons later he chooses a victim - but not before the camera has routinely observed about six months of her naked writhings. The (exclusively female) patients include one incestuously obsessed with her brother - an uptight killjoy who can't even give his sister a kiss without bleating "*It's wrong - you must forget what we did as children*" - and another, the voluptuous Rosalba Neri, whose nymphomania is subtly underlined by means of some luridly bosom-hugging outfits. Despite his international reputation, the best treatment for nymphomania her doctor can suggest is a cold shower!

I suppose the high spot must be the seduction of a dusky South American woman by a lesbian nurse, who suggests dancing naked to a record resembling *Tequila!*. "*That music's from your native country, isn't it?*", she purrs, as they perform an absurd dance which implicates the camera - both girls gaze lasciviously into the lens whilst swaying back and forth across the frame. The unexplained presence of a crossbow and an enormous Iron Maiden lend further incredulity to the senseless droolings of Di Leo's 'plot', padded out with incessant repeat footage posing as dreams and insane flashbacks. Kinski sleepwalks through his 'Mad Doctor' role, uttering his most telling line when

rejecting an amorous patient. "No more please - this is a bit embarrassing", he mutters, as well he might. I kept nodding off through my first viewing of **COLD-BLOODED BEAST**, and only the pen in my hand kept me going the second time. It occurs to me that I still haven't recognised the killer as revealed in the final scenes - and dedicated though I usually am to the shoddiest extremes of the Euro-horror spectrum, there is I'm afraid no way that I'm going to watch this dismal little movie a third time to tell you who the hell he is!

Stephen Thrower

THE CRIMES OF THE BLACK CAT

aka 7 **SCIALLI DI SETA GIALLA**

('7 Shawls of Yellow Silk')

Italy 1972

director: **Sergio Pastore**

screenplay: **Alessandro Continenza, Giovanni Simonelli, Sergio Pastore**

director of photography: **Guglielmo Mancori**

editor: **Vincenzo Tomassi**

music: **Manuel De Sica**

producer: **Edmondo Amati**

cast: **Anthony Steffen** [**Antonio de Teffé**] (Peter Oliver), **Sylva Koscina** (Francoise Bally), **Giacomo Rossi-Stuart** (Victor Morgan), **Jeanette Len** [**Giovanna Lenzi**] (Susan), **Renato di Carmine** (Inspector Janssen), **Umberto Raho** (Burton, Oliver's manservant), **Romano Malaspina** (Harry), **Annabella Incontrera** (Helga Schern), **Liliana Pavlo**, **Shirley Corrigan** (Margot Thornhull).

This highly watchable *giallo poliziesco* didn't receive a British release until four years after it was made, when it was picked up by Border Films who had released Bava's **BLACK SUNDAY** after an eight year ban. **CRIMES OF THE BLACK CAT** did not escape the censor unscathed either, and its original 108-minute running time was pruned by ten minutes. Closely resembling a generic 'greatest hits' package, Pastore's film borrows plot twists from Argento and Bava, and a murder sequence from Hitchcock. In fact, it was the extremely graphic variation on the **PSYCHO** shower slashing that caused the film to be cut.

Set in Copenhagen, the complicated plot tells of a bizarre series of killings that decimate a group of models working for boutique owner Francoise (Koscina). Each victim is killed by a cat whose claws have been dipped in curare, and the only clues are the yellow silk shawls found near the bodies, which have been treated with a substance highly irritating to cats. Peter Oliver (Steffen), a blind composer, sets out to find the culprit after his girlfriend Paula falls foul of the lethal felines. The brutal stabbing of Harry, a photographer, reveals that Paula had been having an affair with Francoise's husband, Victor (Rossi-Stuart), and was blackmailing him. Peter's investigations put him on the trail of a mysterious, white-cloaked woman, who turns out to be the cat's owner. She is Susan (Len), an ex-circus star who now runs a seedy pet shop. Addicted to heroin, she has agreed to co-operate with the real killer in return for a continuous supply of drugs. At the film's climax, having razored Peter's new girlfriend Margot (Corrigan) to death, Francoise is revealed to be the murderer. Her body had been hideously disfigured in a car-crash for which Victor was responsible and she had killed Paula in a desperate attempt to keep her husband for herself. The subsequent murders were committed in order for her to avoid discovery. The police burst in and she hurls herself out of the window of Peter's apartment.

Despite the glaringly obvious lifts from **BLOOD AND BLACK LACE** and **THE BIRD WITH THE CRYSTAL PLUMAGE**, **THE CRIMES OF THE BLACK CAT** is a worthy addition to the *giallo* school. Handsomely mounted, and making excellent use of the imposing Copenhagen locations, the film contains some genuinely eerie, surreal scenes. The highlight of the picture takes place in an old factory, with showers of broken glass crashing down around the bewildered hero. Other standout scenes, atmospherically shot by Mancori, a talented cameraman too often wasted on dismal sexploitation efforts like Joseph Warren (Giuseppe Vari)'s **SISTER EMANUELLE**, include the hooded figure of Susan prowling the deserted streets at night, and a murder attempt in a darkened hospital room. Pastore does a creditable job of building and maintaining the suspense, and his endearing fondness for hysterical zooming and sledgehammer editing effects (Koscina goes through the window three times in slow motion, for example) is nowhere near as detrimental to the film's mood as some idiot critics would have us believe. De Sica's twitching, nervous, jazz based

score is also very effective, adding a suitably neurotic undercurrent to the on-screen mayhem.

On the acting front, the honours definitely belong to the Yugoslavian-born Koscina. Looking fabulously brassy, she goes well over the top in the lurid finale. Slashing Shirley Corrigan (aka Sally Ann Peters) to ribbons in the shower, she next goes after Steffen, finally managing to pin him up against the wall. "You're a monster!", he screams, pushing her away. "Yes I am!", she hisses back, "Even though you can't see it!" At which point her black plastic raincoat opens up to reveal her hideously disfigured breasts and abdomen! By comparison, the other leads, especially Spaghetti Western regular Steffen, give unexceptional performances. But it is always nice to see familiar faces like Umberto Raho (**THE SPECTRE, NIGHT OF THE DEVILS**), Annabella Incontrera (**GOLIATH AND THE VAMPIRES, BLACK BELLY OF THE TARANTULA**), and Shirley Corrigan (**THE DEVIL'S NIGHTMARE, DR JEKYLL AND THE WOLFMAN**) among the supporting cast.

Along with Sergio Martino's **TORSO, THE CRIMES OF THE BLACK CAT** is among the best of the Italian commercial cinema's Argento cash-ins. It is more stylish than Paolo Cavara's **BLACK BELLY OF THE TARANTULA** and more coherent than Umberto Lenzi's ridiculous **SPASMO**. Unfortunately, Pastore's later work, including 1982's **APOCALYPSE OF AN EARTHQUAKE**, has been of negligible interest.

Mark Ashworth

Addendum: So far there's no sign of a much-needed widescreen DVD release for this excellent thriller. Any chance of another 'Giallo Collection' boxset, Anchor Bay? Sergio Pastore died of a heart attack in Rome, 24 September 1987, aged 55, having just completed **AMORE INQUIETO DI MARIA** ('The Restless Love of Maria'). He was married to actress Jeanette Len (real name Giovanna Lenzi) - Susan in **CRIMES OF THE BLACK CAT** - whom he first cast in his charmingly titled 1968 Western **CHRYSANTHEMUMS FOR A BUNCH OF SWINE**. Giovanna Lenzi directed her own *giallo* called **DELITTI** ('Crimes') in 1986, and according to Adrian Luther Smith's *giallo* guide *Blood and Black Lace*, "this incredibly cheap and inept production is probably the worst giallo discussed in this book." Pastore supervised the production.

DEATH BED - THE BED THAT EATS USA, 1977

writer/director: **George Barry**
director of photography: **Robert Fresco**
editor: **Ron Medico**
music: **Cyclobe**
producers: **Jim Williams, George Barry**

cast: **Demene Hall** (Diane), **William 'Rusty' Russ** (Sharon's brother), **Julie Ritter** (Suzan), **Linda Bond** (The Resurrected), **Dave Marsh** (The Artist), **Patrick Spence-Thomas** (voice of the Artist), **Rosa Luxemburg** (Sharon), **Ed Oldani** (victim), **Marshall Tate** (side order).

We begin in darkness overlaid with the steady sound of munching. Suddenly the camera swoops round a bare concrete cellar dominated by a huge Baroque four poster bed and rests upon an etching in the style of Aubrey Beardsley from which a disembodied voice issues:

"I've been imprisoned behind my painting in this limbo for 60 years since my death. I think that in half of that time I've been listening to that monster snore."

Meanwhile, a couple of young be-flared lovers have broken into the house where the bed resides. They lie back and leave their picnic to concentrate on sweet love when the bed sucks them in, dissolving them like Alka Seltzer. Blood splatters a guttering candle and the curtains surrounding the huge bed are flung back by some invisible power.

Thus the film proper begins and is then split into three sections captioned: 'Breakfast' / 'Dinner' / 'The Just Dessert'.

The bed's antecedents are complex and involve the occult. In 1897, a demon residing in a tree fell in love with a beautiful girl. Using its supernatural powers, the demon fashioned a bed on which to seduce her. However, as sexual congress between human and demon is forbidden, she died in the attempt. In grief and rage, the demon returned to its tree and the bed was removed to a nearby house where it has stood ever since, devouring anyone or anything that unwittingly gets close enough.

Through the passage of time right up to the present day we see varied and elaborate flashbacks of the bed and its previous victims. We also learn that the bed's perpetual and furious unsatisfied hunger is so huge that it has even devoured the house that surrounded it, leaving just a

cramped stone bunker which serves as its lair. This small outhouse also contains an etching of the bed, sketched by a consumptive artist around 1917 whom the bed has trapped within the drawing for eternity as its unwilling companion.

Now three girls arrive on a cross country hike. The bed devours two of them, sparing the third who it seems reluctant to injure. Could she be a reminder of the past? With the help of her older brother who has been sent to track her down, she discovers that once every ten years the demon sleeps and the bed loses its power for the duration. The trapped artist inside the sketch can then communicate freely, warning the bed's intended victims and telling them how to destroy it once and for all in a dangerous occult ritual.

Fucking hell. You couldn't make it up. Excellent, subversive, hypnotic visual style with a smattering of still images and SFX work more suited to a pre-1914 feature than a product of circa 1977. The framing suggests a more theatrical approach than a cinematic one. I could easily imagine this as a Grand Guignol theatre-piece, with it's antique yet weirdly tasty effects. In one sequence the acidic fluid that fills the bed strips a man's hand down to the bone (he takes this with admirable stoicism) and his sister has to remove the useless digits for him.

As you can see from the synopsis the narrative isn't just delirious, it's demented. I felt strongly that the viewing public needed a detailed breakdown of this particular piece as it's unlikely that you will ever have seen anything quite like it before. This headlong rush of crazy conceits serving as a plot is liberally dosed with comical flashbacks from the point of view of the bed itself. Nice. One concerns a crazed Victorian entrepreneur who puts the bed outside in a field, electrifies it and turns it into a miracle cure, "a celestial bed" replete with buxom prostitute to ensure a speedy recovery (naturally, this scheme ends in tragedy).

Then we're transported in a swirling montage of newsprint to New York in the 1930s where we read of the bed's exploits as it decimates the populace and eats the Mayor himself. In another cutaway we see a gangster and his henchman use the bed as a hiding place(!) before being inevitably sucked in despite frenzied attempts to shoot it (it's all true). I could go on...

There's ample evidence of poverty here, it's ineffably cheap, and as much of the dialogue as possible is shot without faces in view to avoid painstaking dubbing. However, rather than working against the film as a whole

it merely boosts the feel of vertiginous weirdness. If I had to make a guess at its ancestry I'd say that it started life as a student work with some nudity and repetitive dialogue thrown in to pad it out to feature length. It most definitely has that schizoid feel of art vs. exploitation but this is only a hunch and there are no credits - though an insert has been thoughtfully left to drop them in. All that remains is the inscrutable copyright symbol and the name 'George Barry'.

Against? All I can offer is a philosophical concern, irrelevant to the mechanics of the film itself. Why do ingenuity and vision falter whilst mediocrity reigns supreme? Please tell me so I can sleep better. Surely someone must reissue this and let audiences see the error of their ways. This wins hands down as the most criminally ignored film that I've ever seen and I've seen the lot. Where have all the critics gone? How could you miss this? It makes you wonder, though I'd wager that if this was of Italian origin and not American it would be widely regarded as a key film and deemed suitable for further study. I've never seen anything like this before. On occasion it defies rational belief and you have to pinch yourself to make sure that you're neither dreaming nor intoxicated. This fascinating film doesn't compare with anything else in exploitation. There is simply no other frame of reference to grab at. How do these disparate incidents boil down into a coherent vision? They don't, won't and can't. With most of the linear narrative scrapped you quickly come to the marvellous conclusion that anything can happen and is probably going to. Don't misunderstand me though, I don't think that all of this was by conscious design alone. It's far more likely that a naive serendipity has forged these diverse chunks together into a weird and unified mosaic of atmosphere. So what are you left with? A semi-comedic piece of disjointed but fluid whimsy. That's the nearest that I can get to it. See for yourself and make it a priority.

"You gaze at me as a painting on the wall and I see you as a serving upon some monstrous silver platter." - 'The Artist'

Daniel Craddock

Addendum. **DEATH BED** is due out on DVD from Cult Epics, with an introduction by George Barry and sleeve notes by Stephen Thrower, whose band Cyclobe also provide the music for the film's completed end credits.

DELICATESSEN

France, 1992

directors: **Jean-Pierre Jeunet & Marc Caro**
 screenplay: **Jean-Pierre Jeunet, Marc Caro, Gilles Adrien**
 director of photography: **Darius Khondji**
 editor: **Hervé Schneid**
 music: **Carlos d'Alessio**
 producer: **Claudie Ossard**

cast: **Dominique Pinon** (Louison), **Marie-Laure Dougnac** (Julie Clapet), **Jean-Claude Dreyfus** (Clapet), **Karin Viard** (Mademoiselle Plusse), **Ticky Holgado** (Marcel Tapioca), **Anne Marie Pisani** (Madame Tapioca), **Jacques Mathou** (Roger), **Rufus** (Robert Kube), **Howard Vernon** (Frog Man), **Pascal Benezech** (tried to escape).

In a ravaged city - possibly a post-holocaust future but probably an alternate 1950s - a very French group of apartment tenants concentrate on a very French set of concerns: adultery, suicide, music and, most of all, food. The butcher (Dreyfus) who owns the block has developed a system to support his tenants by hiring odd-job men whom he fattens up and finally turns into tasty meats, usefully supplementing the lentils that have taken over as hard currency in the starving city. The only people who remain untouched by this meat-eater's corruption are the butcher's saintly daughter Clapet (Dougnac), a wistful but myopic cellist, and an old man (Vernon) in the cellar who has turned his home into a watery swamp to support the two essentials of French cuisine, frogs and snails. Into this tidily unhappy world comes Louison (Pinon), an ex-clown grieving over the death of his monkey, whose good-natured decency moves Clapet to betray the cannibals to a cadre of geeky subterranean vegetarian revolutionaries in waterproof coats.

DELICATESSEN has bizarre precedents - **ERASER-HEAD**, **BRAZIL**, **LIFE ON THE EDGE**, **PARENTS** - but it's a delightful original, poised perfectly between farce and horror. The sinister undertones of much 90s French cinema come out in the open in this mainly bloodless but conceptually gruesome item, which presents a cross-section of society stuck together in the crumbling apartment block and lampoons them all, from the senile brothers who manufacture moo-cow novelties to the rich woman whose elaborate suicide attempts consistently backfire. Pinon, best remem-

bered as the plug-ugly punk assassin from 1982's **DIVA** is a quizzically charming hero, wandering around in his clown shoes and resourcefully doing his best to stand by his gutsy but fragile lady-love. A nightmare finish finds them both on the run from the cleaver-wielding butcher, paying off with a trick borrowed from **THE DROWNING POOL** (1976) as the couple are trapped in a flooding bathroom.

In France, short subjects are a major training ground for new directors, a lot more legitimate a field than the ads or pop promos Anglo-American directors cut their teeth on these days. Jeunet and Caro, graduating from a couple of well-liked short films to features, have traces of the style-consciousness of their compatriots Luc Besson and Jean-Jacques Beineix, but also resurrect some of the light, albeit deep black, touch of Jacques Tati. With characters like an officious French postman among the supporting cannibals, and two priceless gag sequences built around creaking bed-springs, the directors show an unusual facility, perhaps derived from Renoir, to love all their characters, no matter how horrid they may be. Fans of Euro-bizarre will especially relish a rare, semi-respectable appearance from Franco favourite Howard Vernon, the original Dr Orloff.

Kim Newman

DEMONS OF THE MINDaka **BLOOD WILL HAVE BLOOD**

Great Britain, 1971

director: **Peter Sykes**
 screenplay: **Chris Wicking**
 director of photography: **Arthur Grant**
 editor: **Chris Parnes**
 music: **Harry Robinson**
 producer: **Frank Godwin**

cast: **Paul Jones** (Carl Richter), **Patrick Magee** (Doctor Falkenberg), **Yvonne Mitchell** (Aunt Hilda), **Robert Hardy** (Baron Friedrich Zorn), **Gillian Hills** (Elizabeth Zorn), **Shane Briant** (Emil Zorn), **Michael Hordern** (Priest), **Kenneth J. Warren** (Klaus), **Virginia Wetherell** (Inge).

Complex, poetic and sumptuously filmed, **DEMONS OF THE MIND** could have been the harbinger of new avenues for the British-made Gothic Horror genre, had



▲ lurking in a sinister fashion - just one of the many **CRIMES OF THE BLACK CAT**

▼ scenes from Peter Sykes' stylish Hammer film **DEMONS OF THE MIND**



anyone cared to follow its example. Instead, Hammer slipped it away at the back end of a double bill with **TOWER OF EVIL** (aka **HORROR OF SNAPE ISLAND**), allowing its strangeness to come and go without further elaboration. Sykes and Chris Wicking did collaborate for Hammer again on the flawed but enjoyable **TO THE DEVIL A DAUGHTER** (1976), but the Dennis Wheatley adaptation pales beside the rich, sombre textures to be found here.

The story concerns a family tainted by the obsessions of a deranged patriarch. Brother and sister Emil and Elizabeth are kept prisoner in a decaying mansion by their father, Baron Friedrich Zorn. He has isolated his children from the world, believing them to be afflicted with an evil bloodlust passed through the generations and worsened by inbreeding. Subjected to ritual bloodletting by their father and their Aunt Hilda, the two children have grown into wan, disturbed young adults. Elizabeth spends most of her time alone in her room, a virtual ghost asprawl her bed, drugged and quiescent, whilst Emil, hollow-eyed and prone to fits of rage, appears ever more emotionally unstable. Brother and sister have formed a bond of incestuous intensity: this and the mental trauma created by his maltreatment only confirms the Baron's fears about the corruption of his family bloodline.

As the film begins we see Elizabeth being taken back home drugged, having run off and enjoyed a few hazy days of freedom in the arms of Carl, a young medical student living alone in a nearby cottage. Meanwhile, someone is murdering local girls in the woods surrounding the Zorn mansion, and sprinkling the dead bodies with rose petals. The villagers and gypsies living in the area fear supernatural forces are to blame, and a crazed wandering priest (Hordern) adds to their distress with his ravings about demons. Equally bizarre in manner is Carl's visiting colleague Dr Falkenberg (Magee), recently ejected from medical practise in Vienna and on his way to meet with Baron Zorn, who has summoned him to discuss the sickness he believes is running rife in his household. Falkenberg tells him that his revolutionary new techniques (on the cusp between mesmerism and psychiatry) may hold the only answer. As the coach races through the forest, the mad priest staggers into the road. The horses panic and the coach overturns. Carl goes to the nearby village for help and learns of the Baron's unpopularity, whilst Falkenberg is found by Zorn's family retainer, the hulking Klaus, and escorted to the Zorn abode.

Much of the subsequent action is arranged in a mosaic-like fashion, making attempts to offer a synopsis rather pedantic. The film is cut in a way which achieves an impressive ambient unease; though at the price of a little confusion, especially where events are compressed in time. Spatial locations are sometimes difficult to visualise and characters flit around obscurely from one place to another. Some of this is down to the need to generate doubt about the nature of the killings plaguing the area, but mostly the oblique styling allows plot strands to infect each other without having to resolve. Religious superstition, insinuations of class struggle and the grey area between science and charlatanism are subject to a subtly kaleidoscopic arrangement in Wicking's script. Narrative drive is subordinated to atmosphere, making the film more akin to the European (specifically Italian) tradition of horror than the prosaic structures of the British Gothic. That's not to say there is no attention paid to plot structure (a frequent criticism of Italian masters like Mario Bava), merely that the writing plays more on implication than explication. There's something pleasingly disorientating about this film being glued together mainly by thematic associations. For instance, though the villagers are eventually mobilized into mounting an attack on the Baron's property, they never seem to get there, the climax taking place some distance away in the woods. The Baron occasionally wanders onto the balcony of his mansion to scan the surrounding countryside through a telescope, and this odd device lends the film a dislocated quality, as if the joining threads others would labour over are being spied for us at a remove, whilst the film obsesses - like its mad patriarchal monster, its demon - on the psychological sickness at its core.

There are a number of conflicts being played out, some of which are historically based (the development of psychology and the recession of supernatural beliefs in the late 19th Century) but percolated through the contemporary attitudes of the early seventies. Falkenberg is given both a boffin's arrogance and a mystic's sense of personal presence: *"Mankind is on the brink of understanding itself at last. Pure knowledge. And myself leading the hunt."* Brandishing his esoteric learning like a deranged Dr Mesmer he is held in comparison with Michael Hordern's lunatic priest, babbling that demons are possessing the Baron. Add the two together and you might just get an Aleister Crowley. Unlike the more standard Hammer horrors, where the figure of Intellect could be either moral and religious (Van Helsing) or amoral

and scientific (Dr Frankenstein), **DEMONS OF THE MIND** spins the two strands within the same plot. In keeping with the rebellious, disillusioned and anarchic spirit of the times, Wicking's script finds little to admire in any of its various authority figures. It's indeed a wonder that even Carl, the callow young hero, is allowed to act without being tarred by the same brush as the others (perhaps indicating a flirtation with idealised visions of a utopia to be realised by the younger generation). Father, doctor and priest are all excoriated one way or another, with the son driven mad by his father's illness and the student alienated by the ruthless ambition of his mentor. The mad priest in particular is a pathetic figure, shambling around in muddy robes and babbling metaphysical inanities, yet still able to panic superstitionist minds.

The conflict between reason and superstition is played out in a setting which buffets the rational with Hammeresque forces of darkness. Falkenberg's journey through the woods is a characteristically wild and windy twilight affair. A nervous driver, spooked by the appearance of the Priest, overwhips the horses until the carriage overturns, leaving doctor and student stranded in the shadowy Bavarian forest and the driver mortally injured. Intercut are scenes at the Zorn residence: there, the atmosphere of sexual malaise and insipient madness is so strong a fanciful viewer might assume it was to blame for the bad weather and grievous accidents. And in at least one scene, the editing establishes an influence at a distance between the sickly brother and sister. More things in Heaven and Earth, it seems...

It's worth comparing **DEMONS OF THE MIND** to the work of Polish emigré Walerian Borowczyk, not least for its scenes of bloodletting, employing a fiendish contraption of brass, suction glass and rubber. Carried into Elizabeth's room with reverence, this device, stored in a velvet-lined box, carries a whiff of fetish-eroticism that the director of **THE BEAST** and **IMMORAL TALES** would have approved. Likewise the themes of confinement, ritualised torture and sexual repression afflicting an ever white-clad Elizabeth leads to comparison with the work of Jess Franco, except that for him Baron Zorn would have no recourse to self-delusion in his feelings towards his beautiful daughter. If the film has a fault it's the way it adheres to notions of female purity. Despite having known physical love with Carl at the start of the film, Elizabeth is granted little in the way of knowledge. She is rarely seen without her white

gown; significantly, the only nakedness is that of the whore who agrees to imitate her in one of Falkenberg's ill-conceived psychodramas. Even her part in the incestuous bond is downplayed - whilst Emil is undoubtedly excited sexually by embraces with his sister, flashbacks and close-ups give Elizabeth the demeanor of a naïf, unaware of the full import of their 'closeness'. Only at the very end do we see her liberated from the role of innocent lamb, a liberation which takes the form of a new monstrosity.

But something magical and unusual was taking shape in the fronds of this strange Gothic drama; an intimation of new life for the British horror genre. Ironically, along with that other great last blast for the Hammer studios **FRANKENSTEIN AND THE MONSTER FROM HELL** (1973), **DEMONS OF THE MIND** flared with inventiveness just as the entire operation was about to sink for good. In its place, Pete Walker was waiting in the wings with his series of gritty, nihilistic horrors, **HOUSE OF WHIPCORD** (1974), **FRIGHTMARE** (1974), **HOUSE OF MORTAL SIN** (1975) and **THE COMEBACK** (1978). Drawing inspiration from the shabbier aspects of British culture in the seventies, Walker ushered in a realistic phase of Brit-horror worlds apart from Hammer's fog-shrouded domain. It took Clive Barker's début, **HELLRAISER** (1987) to attempt a fusion of the two styles, by which time the influence of American hit **A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET** (1985) had begun to distort British projects. Wicking's credit on the dreadful 1988 stinker **DREAM DEMON** was merely the last of a sea of fingerprints smudging the project; without doubt he is best served by reference to **DEMONS OF THE MIND**, a genuinely dream-like film from the days before it became necessary to make a big, self-conscious meal of the fact.

Stephen Thrower

DON'T DELIVER US FROM EVIL
aka **MAIS NE NOUS DÉLIVREZ PAS DU MAL**
France, 1970

writer/director: Joël Séria
director of photography: Marcel Combes
editor: Philippe Gosselet
music: Dominique Ney
producer: Bernard Legargeant

cast: **Jeanne Goupil** (Anne), **Catherine Wagener** (Lore), **Bernard Dhéran** (Motorist), **Gérard Darrieu** (Emile), **Michel Robin** (Leon), **Véronique Silver** (Countess), **Jean-Pierre Helbert** (Count), **Henri Poirier** (Fournier), **René Berthier** (Gustave).

I first saw **DON'T DELIVER US FROM EVIL** in the late 70s at Maidstone College of Art, as a guest at their after-school film club. I didn't know the history of the film, that it had been banned for a while in France, the censorship relating to blasphemy, something I had come across already when co-translating *Le Château de Cène* (The Castle of Communion) by Bernard Noël, its first edition having been subjected to a trial in Paris for "outrages against morals", particular reference being made to the crucifixion pose by the black man to open the secret door in the cliff face, (along with the rape of the protagonist by the dogs, and later by the large monkey)

Through the 70s I had been writing essays for a European-based crime encyclopedia, my forte the handiwork of psychopaths. I knew of the 1954 Parker/Hulme murder case in New Zealand, of the life of the two girls involved (one 15, the other 16), not only through Colin Wilson and various other crime encyclopedic references, but through other texts I had collected on the case, including *Obsession* (1958) by Tom Gurr and H.H. Cox, and an equally interesting book, *The Evil Friendship* (1958), by the little known (and still scandalously ignored, even by the feminist writers) Vin Packer. She was the original female Gold Medal 50s pulp novelist in America, also known as Ann Aldrich (with a series of mainly factual writings on lesbianism), and later as Marijane Meaker, her real name, (though M.E. Kerr, a writer of young adult problem books, eventually provided her main income). For a ten year period Vin Packer wrote crime novels that focussed on the characters, not on mystery and suspense, novels of psychopathic adolescents and homosexuality with a rare explicitness and sympathetic manner for the era. The ambiguity of her name, Vin, was a necessity in the male domain of hard-boiled 50s pulp crime fiction. Even the authoritative lesbian work of the time, *Sex Variant Women in Literature* by Jeannette H. Foster, believed she must be a male writer. Alongside these two books I had other key crime writings that included chapters on the duo, as well as a long paper published in a psychology journal by one of the psychiatrists involved in the case, Dr Medlicott, that contained

more of the writings of the girls than had been quoted elsewhere. By the time I was writing my essay on their headline grabbing murder, they were out of prison, released in 1959, and away into the world, only later to surface, Juliet Hulme as 'Anne Perry' (surnamed after her stepfather), a crime novelist living in Scotland, whose twenty or more fictions are set in Victorian England, and the other, Pauline Parker, unearthed on a horse farm in Kent, both brought to public attention by a major *Guardian* feature in 1996. The prompt for the latter article was the success of Peter Jackson's film **HEAVENLY CREATURES** (1994), with Kate Winslet as Juliet and Melanie Lynskey as Pauline, that had again highlighted what publicity termed the "salacious relationship and alarming murder" from across the world for another generation to savour.

That Parker/Hulme case history was my background as I watched Séria's film, a case that told me this story was probably drawing on a knowledge of the relationship of those two girls, as much as on other fictitious or real events. I still have read almost nothing on the film or the director to know more. **DON'T DELIVER US FROM EVIL** was Séria's debut, an explosive entrance into the film world, but one that seems not to have been sustained, or at least heightened, despite a dozen subsequent credits, mainly in television. As I watched I was inserting my reading of the true story, spurred on by it. And then I noticed the perversity of some scenes, the dwelling on certain images, the obsessiveness of the shots lingering on a dying canary. Also, the repetitiveness of one of the nymphets, Anne (Jeanne Goupil), to stare at herself in the mirror, undressing before her gaze, not an uncommon trait by any pubescent discovering their body, but a useful device for a filmmaker to feast on her nubility for our benefit, and his own. However, what gripped was the dying canary, fed poison by the two girls, who watched as it expired, flapping and fluttering around the cage until it became motionless on a bed of its own droppings on the cage floor, as well as the subsequent sustained shot once the dead pet was found by its owner, the simpleton gardener, who stroked and caressed it, resting his head to gaze at length at his departed comfort and companion. Those images had been left as residue in my mind, though on a recent viewing they failed to hold as convincingly as before, the use of lengthy shots having subsequently become part of cinematic vocabulary in films that have appealed to me. What remained, albeit somewhat charred,

was the concept of the final scene of the two girls burning, side by side, on the school stage before their parents, gathered to see their children perform, reciting Baudelaire as the flames licked their bodies.

The structure that “catered to perversion and fermented moral and mental destruction”, as the French ban had stated, was enhanced by the girls’ choice of literature throughout the film: Baudelaire (*The Flowers of Evil*), Lautréamont (*Maldoror*), and Violette Leduc (*Thérèse and Isabelle*). This was not an uncommon choice for rebellious French youngsters, and one that appealed to a Europhile like myself. But perhaps what had really struck home for me, as for many others in France, was the anti-Catholic stance, with every chance taken to upset and enrage the French religious preference, kicking in with me and my ambivalence to Catholicism after my own upbringing with an Italian mother. Starting with the title, the negation of the line from the Our Father, there followed an anti-religious barrage, scene after scene, from the congregation at Sunday Mass, devout believers portrayed as a collection of zombies, to the priest imagined preaching lasciviously on lust, to the denouncement of the nuns as lesbians in Anne’s confession, with the added bonus of her desire to embarrass the priest, through to the gardener crawling to Calvary as Christ under the flagellating guidance of the two girls, and the stealthy removal of hosts by the girls at Holy Communion, their accumulation awaiting the day when, having stolen vestments and chalice from the chapel at the boarding-school where they spent their weekdays, they could hold their own marriage ceremony to Satan with its bonds of “Body and Blood”, the simpleton gardener as their priest, ending in the procession to the lake where they would end up in the water, clinging see-through “bridal” dresses helping to arouse the pseudo-priest and turn him into a slobbering wreck scrabbling in the dirt.

For Séria it made more sense to work with Catholicism, to tie-in the literature of Baudelaire and Lautréamont and allow the scandal of anti-Catholic behaviour and blasphemy to cause the rumpus, for in the world of film the act of murder is a basic diet. Unlike the reality for Parker and Hulme, two children (regarded as such in those times) who killed one of their mothers in a quiet New Zealand community, shocking the whole country to such a degree that there was little recourse but to flee and disappear into another culture (British as it happens) after their release.

What is perhaps unusual in the film is the lack of violence towards animals. In fact it is contained within the world of pets, initially when Anne manhandles her cat from her lap, but later with the successive murders of the gardener’s caged pet birds, that is more a sadistic attack on the gardener, the dead birds as the implements of torture. Likewise, although the girls have the playfulness to chase the cowhand’s herd into another field while he is left in the middle adjusting his bollocks after Lore’s knee has dealt a swift blow to their rising intentions, when the opportunity occurs to torch the fields or a barn, there is no hint that animals are to be included in the incinerations. In real life the background of various sadistic killers often shows early cruelty towards pets and other animals. Similarly, country children, for all their upbringing with animals, can just as easily become merciless by destroying the farm animals in their games of havoc and destruction.

The link of nature and sexuality is carried in the film, as in the Parker/Hulme case, with the bicycle rides through country lanes, the seats pressing hard between their thighs to stir their passions. In the film Anne and Lore take that forward by taunting the cowhand, pushing him to the point of rape before they scramble away laughing. In the case of the two New Zealand girls it was on a bike ride in the countryside that they realized their friendship was a tighter bond, resulting in a near-naked dance in the open, driving them to such ecstasy that they returned home oblivious to their near state of undress.

It was at that point for Parker and Hulme that their fantasy life took on real shape with midnight sprees in the garden, long baths together and weekends spent in each other’s beds, reading and writing, living out the lives of their fictional characters, founded in their preoccupation with evil, and the right to do what they wanted, an obsession that drew them into a self-enclosed unit that lifted them above the world of other mortals.

In the film we see Anne and Lore in bed together at the dormitory, reading (Baudelaire, Lautréamont and Leduc) and writing. Later we see a manuscript of their fictional writings, ‘Cruel Stories’. Parker and Hulme wrote profusely, accumulating drafts of half-finished novels, and harbouring plans to escape to New York to publish their fictions, before moving on to Hollywood to supervise the filming of their works.

The worlds that both couples created in their fantasies were rooted in distortions of their religious upbringings

and preoccupations with evil. In the film, to telescope the ideas the aforementioned use of particular literature accompanies their progressive actions of malice and perverted intent. It is helped by Anne's family life in a château big enough to allow her and Lore to disappear into the various rooms and outbuildings, a place where parents are too involved in their own lives to be involved with their daughter in anything but a nominal way.

In the Parker/Hulme case, the girls kept their world to themselves, their world of religious distortion taking them onto a higher plane, above Heaven, in what they called "Paradise", their idea of bliss. Pauline had written in her diary (which was the main evidence for all these details) that their revelation of the key to the Fourth World took place at Easter: "We saw a gateway through the clouds." The place they experienced was privy only to a few. "We have an extra part of our brain which can appreciate the Fourth World. Only about 10 people have it." If others thought it a delusion it did not worry them. "I do believe it exists," Juliet told a psychiatrist examining her after the murder.

But as with those who are obsessed with religion, who set out to do evil within the boundaries of religious belief (Parker and Hulme made a determined effort to break all Ten Commandments), there is always the pendulum swing of the sinner, the sudden pangs of guilt. For Anne it comes when she discovers the last remaining pet bird (after killing one a day), who signs its own death warrant by chirping at her presence. Upon completion of the act of squeezing the life from the delicate handful, she flees to the château's chapel to pray for forgiveness. It is only a momentary lapse, of course. Later, after their bra and panties provocation of the abandoned motorist brought home out of the dark, leading him on to his death, they are again filled with guilt. This time they are beyond a total concealment of the murder. Their impulsive action will have left enough clues for the police to eventually arrive at their door. Lore panics and Anne devises a way to maintain their bond. The spectacle of the ending for the film was not the easy and neat option for Parker/Hulme. Their murder accomplished, there was only the momentary shock of desperation before the resumption of their higher-than-other-mortals stance.

People who are not Catholic always find it hard to grasp the idea that Catholic doctrine allows the sinner to repent at the last minute and thus be saved. Even the great-

est sinner. Thus, when someone like Myra Hindley offers remorse or pleas of repentance, there is only derisive laughter. She seems fated to die in prison. Our culture demands that once evil, always evil, particularly for the perpetrators of child murder. Today, Anne Perry says that religion was her saving. More precisely, the Mormons, who believe "that the fall from perfection is part of life." She adds that her career as a crime novelist was not her choice. What drives her is that "I'm obsessed with what is right and what is wrong."

And so to the ending. Knowing that they will be caught and separated, Anne and Lore choose to depart the world together, in defiance of everyone, a pact to be played out for all to see. Before their parents, and the inspector investigating the motorist's death, they take to the stage at school, reciting poems by Baudelaire (*The Death of Lovers*, and the final stanza of *The Voyage* – see below) before setting their bodies ablaze. Huddled together, death kisses them, and we recall that flames are the motif of the film, from the burning fields and barns, to the château's fireplace, or the candles of their midnight sprees, all resonating back to the opening shot of the eternal light of the Sanctuary Lamp placed on the altar... the blaze of glory that stretches from the flames of Heaven to the flames of Hell.

Once this fire has burnt our brains out, we can plunge
Into Heaven or Hell, either abyss will do,
Deep into the Unknown to find the new!

Paul Buck

Addendum: Born in 1936, Joël Séria began his career as an actor in the 1950s. After a short film on boxing, **SHADOW**, in 1969, he made his first, extremely low budget feature, **DON'T DELIVER US FROM EVIL**. Subsequent films include **CHARLIE ET SES DEUX NÉNETTES/CHARLIE AND HIS TWO CHICKS** (1973), **LES GAULETTES DE PONT-AVEN/COOKIES** (1975), **MARIE-POUPÉE/MARIE, THE DOLL** (1976), **COMME LA LUNE/AS THE MOON** (1977), **SAN-ANTONIO NE PENSE QU'À ÇA** (1981) and **LES DEUX CROCODILES/THE TWO CROCODILES** (1987). Since the early 80s he has worked mainly in television, with credits including the popular French series *Nestor Burma*.

DON'T GO IN THE HOUSE

filmed as: **THE BURNING**

USA, 1979

director: **Joseph Ellison**

screenplay: **Joseph Ellison, Joseph R. Masfield, Ellen Hammill**

director of photography: **Oliver Wood**

editor: **Jane Kurson**

music: **Richard Einhorn**

producer: **Ellen Hammill**

cast: **Dan Grimaldi** (Donny Kohler), **Robert Osth** (Bobby Tuttle), **Johanna Brushay** (Kathy Jordan), **Charlie Bonet** (Ben), **Bill Ricci** (Vito), **David McComb** (Salesman), **O'Mara Leary** (pick-up girl), **Ruth Dardick** (Mrs Kohler), **Darcy Shean** (girl in car), **Ralph D. Bowman** (Father Gerrity).

Along with William Lustig's **MANIAC** this is my favourite stalk-and-slash film, or should I say torch-and-stash in this case? Ellison's grim tale of a lunatic kidnapping women to burn with a flame-thrower in a purpose-built steel room is, like **MANIAC**, seemingly disinterested in making its nastiness into **HALLOWEEN**-ish fun... and I'm sorry but I like that in a movie. Indeed, such was my admiration for this sick little number that I once cheerfully predicted great things for its director (to a less than enthralled audience of two or three bemused friends). Well, 20-odd years later and there's no sign of a follow-up so I guess I was wrong, but watching it again - in its uncut form, naturally - I was struck even today by its weird combination of naiveté, kitsch and genuine creepiness - that's before getting onto the topic of its outrageous violence.

The film treads a knife-edge with its depiction of Donny Kohler, who is such a pathetic creature even Joe Spinell might have asked for re-writes. The victim of an extremely cruel mother who punished him by holding his arms over the flames of the gas cooker, Donny can't so much as glance at a box of matches without suffering flashbacks to the abuse. Returning from work one day he discovers his mother has finally croaked, and Ellison has him run gleefully round the house, playing loud music and jumping idiotically up and down on mother's soft furnishings, like a naughty child left alone for the weekend. Relief turns to terror though, when he hears her hated voice call his name.

She's still dead, but Donny has a few problems 'upstairs' already, in the form of whispering voices hissing murderous suggestions in his head. With pain, punishment and fire having been well and truly branded into his twisted mind he sets out to enact a few variations on the theme himself, turning an upstairs room of the rambling old house into a flame-proof torture room.

The film then lurches from the macabre to the hideously sadistic; Donny tricks a young woman back to his house and bashes her round the head with a fire iron. She comes to in the steel-lined room, naked and dangling by her wrists from the ceiling. In a protracted sequence that draws out the preparations to a shuddersome degree, Donny - concealed within a grotesque asbestos suit - douses his shrieking victim with petrol and turns a flame thrower on her. She dies, shockingly, in flames; one of the most outrageous scenes ever to feature in a 'video-nasty'. Nasty it most certainly is, and appallingly convincing, in a way which - though the technique can eventually be discerned (superimposition I believe) - carries one through shock into some sort of admiration. It's a real 'how did they do that?' scene, at least on first viewing.

For a while it seems Ellison may have shot his rotten little bolt with this excessive sequence, but whilst he doesn't throw anything quite so sick at the audience again, other qualities emerge to hold our attention to the end. Donny starts a collection of charred female corpses, which he dresses up in his mother's old frocks, sitting them in armchairs like attendees of some post-apocalyptic tupperware party. The voices in his head gratefully associate themselves with the burnt corpses, and Donny has conversations with them as if they were his guests. Is it paranoia, or are they sniggering at him when his back's turned? Donny, being a worrier, entertains such morbid thoughts and soon his pyromaniac wet dreams turn to nightmares about being dragged down into the earth by his frazzled victims. Stuck indoors, he starts to get seriously freaked out by his own House of Horrors (one wonders if killers like Dennis Nielsen, Jeffrey Dahmer or Robert Berdella had the same trouble). Forced by panic into attempting a social life, he accepts the friendly overtures of a workmate who persists in inviting him on a double date.

In case you were wondering what was so kitsch about all this, the following scenes reveal all. After catching a glimpse of himself in a shop window, clad in the same dreary windcheater and jeans he's been wearing throughout

the film, Donny wanders nervously into a gentlemen's tailors to buy something more suited to the dancefloor. He is pounced upon by so-o offhand sales assistant: "*Why don't you let me set you up with an entire ensemble?*", he purrs. Donny asks about a garish red shirt he saw a woman examining, cringily pretending to recognise its brand name ('The Matador') when the assistant uses it. "*To tell you the truth, she thought it was tacky*", snaps the queen. Recognising a Grade 'A' sucker, he soon has Donny bamboozled with his expensive recommendations: "*Ahem...especially made for dancing. Elastic thread in the seams.*"

Lovers of '70s disco-tack will cherish the gauche psycho's subsequent night out. Ellison points his camera doggedly up from floor level, trying to conceal how pokey the nightclub set is and how pitifully few extras he's been able to rope in. I love to see scenes like this (Italian thrillers and US slashers were replete with them), much preferring my **SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER** done on the cheap with a handful of orthopaedically challenged baboons. In the midst of this frivolity, Donny suddenly gets upset when his date tries to lure him onto the dancefloor. Pulling at his arms beneath the strobe lights, she unwittingly stirs up memories of his mother's punishments. Donny freaks and hurls a table candle at the girl's head. As a frenzied disco song belts out on the soundtrack, she staggers round the dancefloor screaming with her lavish hairdo in flames. It's a scene both horrible and hilarious, giving new meaning to the phrase 'bad hair day' and providing the film's second best set-piece. (What a pity they couldn't have afforded "Disco Inferno" for the soundtrack.) Donny leaves in a hurry pursued by the girl's enraged brother, but stubbornly persists in picking up two drunken girls and inviting them back to his house for a party.

The film fights shy of sadism in the following climactic scenes, returning to the macabre tone of earlier to great effect. As rescuers batter down the door to save the girls, Donny's dead victims rise from their armchairs, withered arms outstretched, and drag him into the flames he's unleashed, assisted by the witch-like re-animated corpse of his mother.

One senses a certain bitterness beneath the surface of this film, directed with some ferocity towards the mother figure. The film closes on a coda showing a little boy being shouted at and slapped by a mean-tempered mom, then staring coldly into space as the voices that haunted Donny echo in his mind. Hardly a sophisticated analysis of child

abuse, this still seems to suggest a little inner-directedness on the part of the writer/director.

DON'T GO IN THE HOUSE is really quite atmospheric and accomplishes a mood of unease as well as physical horror. It was lensed in winter, and benefits from the contrasts between cold, frosty-looking location work (a scene outside the incinerator plant where Donny works is particularly effective), and the awful fiery fate of the victims. There's something so compellingly despondent about much of the story, assisted by Grimaldi's excellent 'loser' performance which lends the film a clumsy integrity. Alan Jones rightly called him "a low-rent Dustin Hoffman" when he reviewed this for *Starburst*. Alan saw nothing else of merit to recommend, but I must disagree; simple and derivative though the plot is, Ellison's alarming film-*flambé* is both sadistic and sombre (one of my favourite combinations; see **THE DRILLER KILLER**, **MANIAC**, **I SPIT ON YOUR GRAVE**). I had high hopes for further horrors from Ellison, so please; if anyone reading this discovers that he went on to make high-school slapstick movies for Israeli producers, spare my blushes and keep it to yourself!

Stephen Thrower

DUFFER

Great Britain, 1971

director: **Joseph DesPins**, **William Dumaesq**
 screenplay: **William Dumaesq**
 director of photography: **Jorge Guerra**
 editor: **Joseph DesPins**
 music: **Galt MacDermot**

cast: **Kit Gleave** (Duffer), **Erna May** (Your Gracie), **James Roberts** [William Dumaesq] (Louis-Jack), **Lisa Doran** (Tobacconist), **Marcelle McHardy** (Landlady), **David Hudson** (Policeman), **Anthony Lambert** (Male Drunk), **Traute Kraus** (Female Drunk), **Jean-Pierre Roche** (Man on Embankment), **Bogonir Rampre** (Man in Black Street).
duffer. n. (*informal*). a dull or incompetent person. 2. (*slang*). something worthless.

DUFFER is the most obscure film I know and one of the strangest. It touches (more like wallows in) one of the most forbidden and disapproved fantasies of our culture - male

sexual desire for the father - and seems enlightened by some sort of personal exorcism/revelation. I don't think there are many films to even acknowledge the existence of this fantasy/taboo, whereas the Oedipal convention of son's desire for mother has been done to death. Any film addressing this idea is going to have at least novelty on its side but this is a film with many unusual facets. Imagine Dennis Cooper's novel *Try* directed by the Mike Leigh of **BLEAK MOMENTS**. If that seems absurd (and I know these 'x meets y' film-crit formulas belong in the broadsheets and *Time Out* guides) take it as a sign that this is truly a film *sui generis*.

Shot on grimy 16mm around West London, **DUFFER** embraces 'underground' subject matter whilst stepping aside from the formalist extremes of the early seventies avant-garde. Spurning structuralism and abstraction, then the norm for experimental film-makers, DesPins and Dumaresq's inspiration seems to come more from twentieth century literature than the cine-avant-garde, with characters who might have been at home in the work of T.S. Eliot or James Joyce. In film terms, the combination of narrative convention and 'underground' subject matter is comparable to the work of Peter Whitehead - indeed **DUFFER**, with its violent romance between a teenager and a paternal figure, is like the other side of the coin to Whitehead's **DADDY** (1973), in which two young girls sexually humiliate and torment their father.

Duffer is a teenage boy involved in a sado masochistic relationship with an older man - this older man may be his uncle, his father or just some bit of rough he's gravitated to on the streets. He's also seeing an older woman, a prostitute with maternal feelings who could be his mother. With his air of failure and physical gaucheness represented by his inelegant name, Duffer is a waif - scuffed, tangled, wasted, child-like - being puppeteered through adolescence by his barely understood sexual urges. A prime case for protection from the 'evils' of adulthood.

This vague, dishevelled youth is the focus of the narrative, and he provides that time-honoured low-budget feature, a voice-over narration, sharing the naiveté of innocence defiled - except that he calmly seeks his supposed defilement and undergoes various trials and tribulations without complaint. Duffer doesn't recognise anyone except the two magnetic poles of his life - and the kind of help they offer would make Social Services combust. He wanders alone, a bundle of unwashed teenage linen across London's Hammersmith Bridge, a

bedraggled wraith with nowhere to go except his perpetual drama figures: Louis-Jack and Our Gracie.

Our Gracie is a whore, lifted plump and sighing from T.S. Eliot's *The Wasteland*, living in a bedsit basement flat. (The name is an obscure reference to English war-time singer Gracie Fields, affectionately referred to as 'Our Gracie' by fans). She's like the fat-cheeked woman in **ERASERHEAD** reduced to turning tricks, without illusion or mystery. In fact the whole film feels like a Lynch pre-echo, bled dry of humour and grandiosity yet still retaining a sense of the absurd and the horrible, and still claspings to its unhealthy bosom the notion of a bliss that can't be completely extricated from dirt and pain. Our Gracie entrances Duffer with the tired left overs of her sexual allure, like a circus performer jumping through the hoops one last time to prove she may once have had IT, whatever IT is. (There's a bitter Andy Milligan feel here for those who can appreciate it).

When Duffer takes off his pants and starts pumping his bony pelvis against Our Gracie's cellulose, she sets off a timer in the form of a pecking bird, a mechanical toy which descends down a pole, millimetre by millimetre. On the soundtrack, a synthesizer accompanies this morbid sub-Fellini device. (Check the under-rated **FELLINI-CASANOVA** to see how the cash-bloated Queen of Italian cinema achieved much the same effect with a big name cast and crew).

So that's that. Duffer fucks his raddled old whore of a mom. Big deal. She offers a dingy, cigarette-smokestained refuge from the green-gray outside, and she is at least kind, in a sickly, rather cloying way. But Duffer is a strange boy, and his pain is a strange pain. He's a bit of a poof, a victim, a moper and scrounger, available for abuse of whatever kind, ripe for the picking...

Louis-Jack is a sweaty, ungroomed ex-lorry driver sort of man, a Wormwood-Scrubs semi-psycho, a monster in a fairytale, a loving father tucking his little boy up in bed to read him a story about a monster in a fairytale who is tucking his little boy up, fucking his little boy up. This is the man in Duffer's life, to be trusted and obeyed as the trust turns to disgust and obedience to desire, and so on...

Louis-Jack is a force of nature - Our Gracie is some distant shore upon which Duffer may be swept by Daddy/Uncle/Louis-Jack - a shore depleted by fatigue and a certain 'gentleness'... gentleness which, like her emptiness, is useless to Duffer as he has his own supply...



left: images from Jess Franco's *EROTIC RITES OF FRANKENSTEIN*.

main picture: Donny Kohler models his new look for a less than enthusiastic fan in *DON'T GO IN THE HOUSE*.

When Louis-Jack fucks Duffer the feeling is really different to doing it with *Our Gracie*. It means pain of sorts and a kind of shame and a curdled excitement. At least it's intense rather than drab, which is great in a way for Duffer, who lives in drabness. Even though there's hurt and a feeling that he's twisted and mangled by this man, it's still a living thing, a feeling, especially when Louis-Jack gets violent. It's just a game and the rules are there to be obeyed like any other game, except Louis-Jack is the referee and the opponent simultaneously. All Duffer wants is to play his part, the ease and comfort of submission. Round and round, circle of abuse, don't stop in case the real world of bus-shelters and chips and cold weather returns.

Duffer oscillates between Louis-Jack and *Our Gracie*, sharing his tattered self with them in an unco-ordinated way that could pass for poignant if it weren't for his spots and disaffection and air of victim-for-hire. Momma's a whore... Daddy's a monster... Duffer's a mangled cliché...

Directors DesPins and Dumaesq could go either way with this material. They could have the youth achieve some sort of heroic 'redemption'. Oedipus makes good. But it's not that simple. Mostly they follow a different logic, a kind of magic realist route through a far less travelled fantasy terrain. Duffer is really a daddy's boy - you can tell by his belly, swelling up now from his skinny frame as if a balloon was under his jumper. When he came in his dusty old momma, nothing happened. But when Louis-Jack came in Duffer...

Duffer gets pregnant, much to the joy of his 'husband'. The boy's jumper bulges with the evidence, cheap second-hand clothes cradle the unborn thing. Whatever it is. Like *"They're not even sure it IS a baby!"* Duffer's trips to 'mother' fail to resolve or change anything. Redundant. But these visits to 'the other side' are dangerous nonetheless. Louis-Jack knows where Duffer's been. That night he's in a black mood, unforgiving, drunk, dangerous. The dark closes round. Uncleaned basement windows reverberate in silence. Anything Louis-Jack says must go.

It's hard to recall just where the worms came from. There are worms in Louis-Jack's hand, real earthworms, moist and squirming. 'Daddy's sex games take on a new perversity as he shoves them in Duffer's mouth whilst fucking him....'

I remember little else after this. I saw **DUFFER** in 1984 in strange circumstances and haven't seen it since. If

there were further psychosexual layers to explore they've been lost in the accumulated fog of years. I review this film as a fragment, it feels like a cinema non-sequitur and I have to treat it as such since I can't remember a closure, if there even was such a thing. I'm left with the image of a youth passively open to a violent and loving corruption. There's not much I can do but describe, and work into the description, exchanging energy with it in recognition of this film's ability to infect my imagination: returning the favour by infecting it back, which, to come over all 'literary', is what happens between the flowers of evil in place of pollination.

Stephen Thrower

THE EROTIC RITES OF FRANKENSTEIN
aka **LES EXPERIENCES EROTIQUES DE FRANKENSTEIN/LA MALEDICION DE FRANKENSTEIN/THE CURSE OF FRANKENSTEIN**
Spain, 1972

director: **Jess Franco**
screenplay: **Jess Franco**
director of photography: **Raoul Artigot**
editor: **Roberto Fandiño**
music: **H. Tical, Vincent Geminia, Victor de Costa**
producer: **Victor de Costa**

Cast: **Howard Vernon** (Cagliostro) **Anne Libert** (Melissa, The Bird-Woman) **Dennis Price** (Dr Frankenstein), **Britt Nichols** (Madame Orloff), **Alberto Dalbes** (Doctor Jonathan Seward), **Luis Barboo** (Cagliostro's manservant) **Beatrice Savon** (Vera Frankenstein), **Jess Franco** (Morpho, Dr Frankenstein's assistant), **Fernando Bilbao** (The Monster), **Daniel Gerome [Daniel White]** (Inspector Tanner).

The films of Jess Franco defy simple comment. With over 150 movies under his belt since 1959, it might seem unlikely for him to have invested many with individual characteristics. But, despite a general preoccupation with aberrant sex and violence, the range of mood and visual style is quite remarkable from a director who has sometimes made as many as ten films in one year.

The element of Franco's 'style' to which the most attention has been drawn is his mania for the zoom lens, the use

of which, to listen to his critics' ravings, would seem equivalent in film-making terms to leaving the lens cap on. Quite apart from the fact that, in certain cases, Franco's use of the zoom lens has a distinct and effective structural application, it really isn't as obtrusive and aesthetically offensive as many critics claim - even when it's obvious that it's being employed to avoid the time and effort required to move the camera. Perspective distortion is certainly alright by me; who the hell wants everything to look like **THE BICYCLE THIEVES**? Franco's persistent zooms can be irritating at times but they can also give his work a guerilla, hit-and-run style reminiscent of the early films of the French New Wave. Another comparison: the zoom is to Jess Franco what the bar chord was to punk rock - a quick and effective way of making an impact.

Describing the plot of this movie is almost pointless, but briefly, it concerns the abduction of Dr Frankenstein's beloved silver-painted Monster-cum-muscleman (Barboo) by an immortal bug-eyed libertine called Cagliostro, played with coke-crazed intensity by Howard Vernon. Also a party to this misdeed is Melissa, the astonishing 'Bird-Woman' (Libert), who bursts in on Dr Frankenstein (Dennis Price, looking completely befuddled in the role) and claws him to death. Melissa is naked save for the irregular patches of feathers she sports, and communicates in a series of rambling poetic monologues, interspersed with strangled squawks. Having acquired the Monster, Cagliostro then directs it to assist in abducting young women upon whom he can exert his hypnotic gaze, a saucer-eyed glare which commands their complete subservience. The aim? To breed these women with the Monster, creating a race of super-powered slaves conditioned to obey the will of Cagliostro.

But enough of the day job. One of the highlights of Cagliostro's social calendar is an evening at home in his massive castle watching a naked man and woman, tied back to back, being ferociously and protractedly whipped. Around them is a circle of razor-sharp spikes. When one or the other can stand the pain no more they are faced with the 'thorny' moral dilemma of deciding whether to fall forward onto the spikes... or backward so that their partner cushions the fall. Such a spectacle clearly appeals to Cagliostro's guests - that is, the assorted skeletons, corpses, candy-skulls-on-sticks and **FELLINI-SATYRICON** lens-stares who've gathered to watch - all of whom are holding robes around themselves like bad biblical extras.

Meanwhile back at the lab', a Holmes and Watson pair investigating Dr Frankenstein's death discover, in his notebooks, the instructions for re-animating a corpse! Following his simple step-by-step guide, they revive him and then pump him for information about his killers. It takes several intense post-mortem interviews with the good Doctor to discern the name of Cagliostro from the dead man's nonsensical ramblings, but eventually they are on their way to a showdown with the fiendish libertine. Forced to flee when the detectives persuade the Monster to attack its new master, Cagliostro rides off into the crashing sea in a horse-drawn carriage, laughing maniacally, and there you have it...

Clearly, we're not talking Great Art here - Franco is no Argento, and it's unlikely that his obscure back catalogue contains an **INFERNO** or an **OPERA**. But it would seem that, at his best, he operates in a bizarre overlap between Art, Exploitation and Random Lunacy. His work is consistently idiosyncratic, even when it's dull and stupid, which some of it undoubtedly is! Anyone who has seen his appalling **WHITE CANNIBAL QUEEN** or **REVENGE IN THE HOUSE OF USHER** is going to be astonished when confronted by the completely different brand of gibberish that is **THE EROTIC RITES OF FRANKENSTEIN**. Even at his most ridiculous, Franco, aided greatly by Artigot's hallucinatory wide-angle compositions, manages to make the proceedings as mesmerizing as they are absurd. He invites us to enter a private world of sexual fantasy, a delirious and macabre erotic party - it scarcely makes sense but there's an oneiric recognition nonetheless, as if we once dreamed this scenario and Franco has staged its revival for our pleasure. Also worthy of mention is the quite brilliant score, which combines disturbingly off-kilter jazz with hellish electronic/ rock spasms reminiscent of the early records of seminal Kraut-rock group Faust.

The version of this film available for a while on video in Britain fell short of the full stretch by an astonishing 25 minutes, running for under 70 minutes all told. Whatever the content of the missing footage (at a guess, probably pornographic), there's enough here to make even this truncated version worth tracking down. Finally, a word to the curious - Jess himself plays Dr Frankenstein's assistant and is killed in the opening scene...

Stephen Thrower

THE ETRUSCAN KILLS AGAIN
aka **L'ETRUSCO UCCIDE ANCORA/THE DEAD ARE ALIVE**

Italy / Yugoslavia / West Germany, 1972

director: **Armando Crispino**
screenplay: **Lucio Battistrada, Armando Crispino**
director of photography: **Erico Menczer**
editor: **Alberto Galliti**
music: **Riz Ortolani**
producers: **Artur Brauner, Mondial Tefi**

cast: **Alex Cord** (Jason), **Samantha Eggar** (Myra), **John Marley** (Nikos), **Nadja Tiller** (Leni), **Horst Frank** (Stephan), **Enzo Tarascio** (Giuranna), **Enzo Cerusico** (Alberto), **Carlo De Mejo** (Igor), **Vladan Milosinovic** (Otello), **Daniela Surina** (Irene).

"Damn those lousy Etruscans!" Crispino's film initially comes on like a supernatural saga about re-animated zombies, but sadly this is not to be, despite the film's occasional resemblance to Andrea Bianchi's **ZOMBIE 3**. After a necking couple are gruesomely murdered by an unseen figure, the positioning of the corpses leads police and archaeologist Jason Porter (Alex Cord) to believe that the crime is a tribute to the ancient Etruscan demon-god Tuchulcha, whose tomb Porter has recently penetrated with a camera probe. The photographs are seen by a number of visitors to Porter's cabin. At this point the film shifts definitively into *giallo* mode, with a disorderly plot staggering through a pile-up of blackmail, secret family relations and fragmented flashbacks. Porter is a reforming alcoholic with one of those amnesia problems so beloved of scriptwriters who've scribbled themselves up shit creek, and his ex-wife Myra (Samantha Eggar) - now attached to Nikos Samarakis (John Marley), a despotic orchestra conductor - is reluctant to pick things up with him again because of a drunken stabbing incident which Porter has completely forgotten. The cast is aflame with other suspects: Nikos's smouldering masochistic assistant, his clandestine, fire-scarred wife, a sneeringly camp dancer, and a sadistic guard who sets fire to insects. The murderer turns out to be someone who had already apparently survived a murderous attack, and the film achieves some real shock value at the climax as the deranged killer attacks the remaining leads, screaming in a hysterical manner.

This is a jerkily edited, oddly paced but still enjoyable film. To obscure the killer's identity whilst presenting a patchwork of revelations is of course the aim of *giallo* narratives, but here the ambition seems to have outstripped the editor's abilities. Among the pleasures to survive the contorted structure are good performances by Marley and Eggar, some atmospheric locations (including the Etruscan ruins and an ancient amphitheatre near the city of Cerveteri in central Italy) and a car chase through narrow streets in a beautiful old Italian town. There's also one splendid hallucinatory scene, picked out spookily by Porter's torchlight, showing ancient human remains crumbling into powder and blowing away as fresh air disturbs a newly opened tomb.

Stephen Thrower

EXCESSE DE SADE

Producers/Directors: **Mike Luis, Charly Onrop**

Participants: **Brigitte Z, Dave S, Walter D, Inge L, Dolly P, Molly K, and starring Madame X.**

A man (the viewer) arrives at a brothel. He has come to find the answer to the question "What is perverse?" "You want to know what is perverse, you pig?", the Madame replies, "Then you have come to the right place! I will spend many hours showing you."

EXCESSE DE SADE actually spends one hour showing us, but certainly tries to pack in everything its demented directors can think of. It is a film that combines an American sense of humour with German perverseness, a desperate attempt to break every barrier of good taste. Whether this pornucopia is gruesome, boring or laughable is left for you to judge.

The man is led downstairs between two girls dressed as maids masturbating their ringed cunts. A podgy man wearing matching rubber hood and pants is rubbing himself. "Got a problem?", asks Madame X, "Stop doing that." With the help of another girl dressed in bondage gear like herself, he is sucked, strung upside down, turned, caressed, lowered, masturbated etc, all to a jolly beer hall type-tune and '60s psychedelic lights. The Madame gets bored and calls for the slave to be brought in. The jolly beer-hall music

continues, as it does periodically throughout the film, while a truly massive dildo goes up his ass, followed by a gloved and well vaselined fist. The maid then sucks him with her dress pulled up, so she can be screwed from behind and have candle wax dropped on her back. The psychedelic light is replaced with a slowly increasing strobe, smoke comes in to slowly obliterate the scene, and the Madame delivers a paean to fun, enjoyment and fetishism ending with the words "*And so you see. Nichts ist pervers!*", a statement she repeats three times. However, in case we didn't get it, a card comes up to fill the screen: "*NICHTS ist pervers!!*" This is the sort of thing only the Germans know how to do!

Moving on, we get a lesbian scene with much rolling of the eyes, perhaps due to too much exposure to psychedelic lights. Madame X, watching, gives encouragement until deciding that piss is needed. This is done liberally in every orifice and position, driving everyone, naturally, into ecstasies. More close lovemaking ensues between wet bodies, augmented by a funnel and tube to get the stuff right inside a cunt before it is gushed out again, with finger probing to elicit maximum drainage. During a rest in which the cast drink champagne mixed with piss, the statement "*Nothing is perverse if it makes you happy*" is again cut with the card proclaiming "*Nichts ist pervers.*" Could this be a film with a message?

The point about this film isn't so much what the participants do, but the way they really revel in it in a desperate attempt to shock. Fetishism, especially in clothing, is emphasised throughout. No boring nude bodies here! Take the next scene, set in a doctor's surgery. Maid uniforms, nurse uniforms, rubber, stilettos, nappies. A man burbles "*Mummy, mummy, I will never forget you*", whilst sucking on a dummy and being wanked. Dummies go into mouths and vaginas, an electrically driven dildo machine is employed, and to the strains of a German version of *The Birdie Song* the man extracts a bloodied tampon and sucks it whilst masturbating. He is pushed into a pool as the Madame exhilarates "*Everything is beautiful. Nichts ist pervers*", and via the reinforcing card we move to the *pièce de résistance*.

Leaving aside a few opening activities, this basically consists of two girls getting massive enemas and then squirting them out over a skinny, balding bloke who grovels on the floor receiving it all with cries of happiness as he rubs it over himself. The camera moves in for close-ups of brown liquid trickling out of puckered assholes, dribbling over cunts, then pulls back to show it gushing out up to a metre

and a half. Specks of shit and muck spatter the man's body as he rubs it all in and cries out for it never to end...

"*So you see,*" says Madame X, "*everything is alright. Everything is beautiful.*" Once more the screen is filled with the words "*NICHTS ist pervers!!*"

And you as the viewer just have to sit there and agree.

Charlie Phillips

EYEBALL

aka **WIDE-EYED IN THE DARK / GATTO ROSSI IN UN LABIRINTO DI VETRO / THE SECRET KILLER**
Spain/Italy, 1974

director: **Umberto Lenzi**

screenplay: **Félix Tussell, Umberto Lenzi**

director of photography: **Antonio Millán**

editor: **Amedeo Moriani**

music: **Bruno Nicolai**

producer: **José Maria Cunilles**

cast: **Martine Brochard** (Paulette Stone), **John Richardson** (Mark Burton), **Ines Pellegrini** (Naiba), **Andrés Mejuto** (Inspector Tudela), **Mirta Miller** (Lisa Sanders), **Daniele Vargas** (Robby Alvarado), **George [Jorge] Rigaud** (Reverend Bronson), **Silvia Solar** (Katia Alvarado), **Marta May** (Alma Foster), **Raf Baldassarre** (coach driver).

Umberto Lenzi has never made it to the front ranks of Italian horror alongside Argento, Bava and Fulci, but his first few *giallo* thrillers are nonetheless brisk and enjoyable entertainment, with a cynical edge that really comes to the fore in his mid-seventies *poliziesco* movies (**ALMOST HUMAN** and **NAPOLI VIOLENTA**, for example). **EYEBALL** slumps well below even Lenzi's modest standards, yet still manages to achieve a sort of bleary-eyed charm by establishing itself firmly in that most isolated of sub-genres - The Coach-Trip *Giallo*!

The plot concerns a series of brutal but evasively shot murders plaguing a small group of holiday-makers during a coach-trip around Spain. The assembled fun-seekers include a bickering husband and wife, a lesbian couple, a solitary priest, a boss with his lover/secretary and a lecherous tour guide with a taste for pathetic practical jokes. One by one, the group fall prey to a maniac who delights in stab-

bing victims to death, then removing one of their eyes. Businessman Mark Burton (Richardson) and his secretary Paulette (Brochard) are the main focus of the story, with Burton's flashbacks to his wife Alma (May) lying unconscious beside a pool, knife in one hand and bloody human eye in the other, providing merely the most elaborate of a huge shoal of red herrings. Everyone acts in a thoroughly suspicious manner until the plot's 'Wheel of Guilt' arrow finally comes to rest on the real killer, who is caught removing a glass eye and replacing it with a bloody orb plucked from a fresh victim - all of which would be quite gruesome if it wasn't for the real eyes being so clearly visible beneath terrible 'empty socket' make-up. And the motive? The lunatic had an eye gouged out during a childhood game of 'doctors and nurses', resulting in a pathological jealousy of others with eyes the same colour!

EYEBALL is unimaginatively shot, poorly written and packed with stupid, ugly characters - as a thriller it's a non-starter. Everyone acts suspiciously; a man can't so much as have a shave without 'significantly' fondling his straight razor. The usual police investigation footage is boring and pointless, as always in Grade-Z *giallo*-land; and yet...

Lenzi's ridiculous clunker, if watched in the right mood, can be a fun ride. There's something hysterical about a plot which doesn't allow a vicious serial killer to get in the way of the characters' holidays. The endangered sunseekers react with horror to the corpse of each new victim - yet minutes later they're back on their stunted little bus as it trundles through Barcelona on its way to the next tourist site. Perhaps it's the washed out, dejected theme tune by Morricone's pal Bruno Nicolai that creates the mood. There's something absurdly loveable in its dreary persistence, comically limping into 'excitement' mode every time the coach potters off on the next leg of its itinerary.

Elsewhere, it's possible to reflect on the typically Catholic *giallo* preoccupation with making every character act as if they harbour terrible guilty secrets, without coming across any evidence that Lenzi has given this theological notion a single thought. Never one to burden his work with allegory or artsy nonsense about themes or ideas, Umberto manfully refuses to play to the textually minded among us. Anyone who might expect a plot-line about a killer gouging out eyes to be related thematically to, for instance, voyeurism - or the act of watching a movie - is given very short shrift! 'Disappointed by my utterly empty use of the eye motif?', he seems to be saying, 'Well

tough - go and watch some Godard films, you freak, and give me a break!'

But never mind: seen as a film that is to the *giallo* cycle what **ROBOT MONSTER** was to '50s sci-fi, **EYEBALL** is a good laugh. And if you think this one's bad, just take a look at Lenzi's **SPASMO**!

Stephen Thrower

LA FEMME PUBLIQUE

France, 1984

director: **Andrzej Zulawski**

screenplay: **Dominique Garnier, Andrzej Zulawski** from Garnier's novel

director of photography: **Sacha Vierny**

editor: **Marie Sophie Dubus**

music: **Alain Wisniak**

producer: **Rene Cleitman**

cast: **Valerie Kaprisky** (Ethel), **Francis Huster** (Lucas Kessling), **Lambert Wilson** (Milan Mliska), **Gisèle Pascal** (Gertrude), **Roger Dumas** (André), **Diane Delor** (Elena Mliska), **Jean-Paul Farré** (Pierre), **Olivier Achard** (assistant director), **Patrick Bauchau** (Ethel's father), **Yveline Ailhaud** (Rachel).

'That's the one where Valerie Kaprisky walks around nude for the whole film', I was told almost ten years ago, when I first began to find out more about the films of Andrzej Zulawski. Well, the description may have been a bit exaggerated, but Kaprisky does indeed appear conspicuously sans-'kit' in several confrontational scenes. Even Helen Mirren might blush at the prospect of flaunting her body quite as vigorously as Kaprisky does here, though **LA FEMME PUBLIQUE** at times resembles the work of Peter Greenaway, who cast Mirren in similarly frank nude scenes for **THE COOK, THE THIEF, HIS WIFE AND HER LOVER**.

Like the theatrical milieu of Zulawski's **L'IMPORTANT C'EST D'AIMER**, this depiction of passionate complications during the making of a film vibrates with actorly trauma, romantic angst and shrieking conflicts of ego. Brashly utilizing distanciation techniques as if they were his personal contribution to the language of film, Zulawski gives De Palma a run for his money in the realm

of reflexive cheek. What he adds to the panoply of Nouvelle Vague motifs on display is a consistent ability to wring intense performances from his casts; here, Kaprisky and Huster belt out their antagonistic tirades with blistering energy. Thank goodness the inevitable absurdities are knowingly fielded!

Kaprisky plays a young model who is invited by director Francis Huster to audition for a part in his upcoming film, an adaptation of Dostoevsky's *The Possessed*. Whilst accepting the role that is offered, she continues her regular work, dancing naked for photographs taken by a 'respectable' but taciturn photographer. Her first experience of film making is a carnivalesque rehearsal, shot on video with the histrionic cast. After seeing her photogenic looks on the video monitor, the priapic director falls for the young woman. Amidst an obscurely motivated street protest, he takes Kaprisky back to his palatial apartment.

The next day, work begins on the film, a period costume drama, and the protégé has plentiful opportunity to witness her director's bullying, deliberately aggravating techniques. He cuffs a make-up lady round the ear for a faulty application and seems hell-bent on winding up the performers. Fortunately most of them are already as mad as balloons, slicing their ham so thick it can squeal. Kaprisky's first attempt at a straight-to-camera soliloquy provokes mute consternation from the professional cast and torrents of ranting from the director. However, the scene requires the actress to show a fragile calm surface beneath which rages a barely suppressed turmoil - not surprisingly, her next take is better. That evening, they return to the auteur's flat and fuck violently - but the following morning Kaprisky is surprised and disgusted to find him downstairs, romping around with a woman who may be his wife.

Less frenzied but more troubled is handsome young political activist Lambert Wilson, previously seen defending the assaulted make-up woman. Kaprisky turns to him for affection, and they make out at his flat amidst a degree of bachelor disorder and the French film version of poverty (big rooms with distressed walls and sparse furnishings). Soon they too are at each other's throats, the difference being that Wilson's tirades turn inwards to gestures of self-destruction and negation. During a row with Kaprisky and the jealous Huster, at a restaurant where Wilson washes dishes, the struggling politico quaffs a wine-glass full of dirty scrub-water, chasing it with a mouthful of broken glass.

Kaprisky's next still photo-shoot is especially traumatic and ends with the elderly photographer keeling over as if from a heart-attack. Returning for solace to Wilson's darkened apartment, she finds him standing behind his heavy curtains, staring morosely over Paris, a gun in one hand and a banana in the other. After a bit of a row, he eats the banana. When Kaprisky sees the TV news of a church leader's assassination though, the footage reveals Wilson as the gunman.

As filming draws to a fog-shrouded climax, Wilson and Kaprisky juggle the rigors of acting with the acrobatic demands of Wilson's fugitive status, leading as it does to several car chases, explosions and shootings. A third and final visit to the photographer's studio proves less than cordial and Kaprisky's love life goes out the windscreen thanks to a road accident. Learning of this through the ubiquitous TV news, she is consoled by her solicitous director, who points to her cover-feature status in 'Elle' and 'Paris Match' as compensation for heartache. Just to cheer her up, he commits suicide by hanging and a heartless cameraman pursues the shocked girl for a close-up, before Zulawski finally relents and assembles his entire cast on a wet and windy Paris Boulevard for an ensemble theatrical bow.

Gruelling as all this sounds, Zulawski's penchant for gorgeous low-angle camera-work and perverse humour keeps **LA FEMME PUBLIQUE** from grating too hard on the nerves. As always, his tracking shots, though smooth, don't compromise the camera's angular relations to moving objects. The fluidity offered by the Steadicam to style-hungry directors often degenerates into aimless wandering, and today's cinema suffers terribly from its indiscriminate use. Zulawski's preference for tracking shots and the louma crane thankfully avoids this, as without the cool gliding perspectives and immaculate sense of framing, this verbally crowded film could be a bit much to take (like Transactional Analysis in a stalled lift). The crystal clear, blue-tinged photography of **POSSESSION** - such an inspiration to Argento as he embarked on **TENEBRAE** - is replaced here by burnt orange and wood tones, courtesy of the incomparable Sacha Vierny (famed for his marvellous work on **LAST YEAR AT MARIENBAD**, and now the regular collaborator of Peter Greenaway). The only comparable 'look' I can think of is Von Trier's **ELEMENT OF CRIME** which takes its dystopian lighting scheme even further; although comparison might also be made to **OPERA**'s sombre colour-schemes. The Argento film is also worth

mentioning to compare the central performances; Valerie Kaprisky and Christina Marsillach exude similar qualities of hurt glamour and underlying resourcefulness. And both portray women who are cajoled, threatened and provoked into 'production', either through performance in the arts or in their 'private' affairs. But if Betty in **OPERA** has her secrets only fully externalized at the film's end, Kaprisky's character is living in a world where 'secrets' are immediate grist to the mill of performance.

Central to this theme, and the film's mildly scandalous commercial profile in France, are those three nude photo-sessions. The first, startling and faintly discomfiting, has Kaprisky dance strenuously, to a horrid, elephantine disco track - the sort of synthesized funk that always seems to be frumping its way through the Continental pop charts. I don't know if it's meant to enhance the naked cavorting or impede the possibility of a casual voyeurism. Perhaps it's useful to contrast it with Brian De Palma's choice of music in the dirty dancing sequence of **BODY DOUBLE** (also made in 1984), recalling what the American critic J. Hoberman calls "[its] prancing, perky, breathless post-disco theme - the music one might use to accompany an imaginary 'Disneyland Blue' whose credit sequence begins with Timberbelle stripping off her gossamers and sitting on Pluto's face."

The second sequence goes even further in its extraordinary alienation effect. Whilst a somewhat 'ooh-la-la' arrangement plays on the soundtrack, Kaprisky's choreographed display leans towards the Egyptian and even hints at a Michael Jackson 'Moonwalk' - very peculiar when performed in the nude by a voluptuous young woman. Things get more extreme when she begins to build aggressive convulsions into her 'routine' and exhibit emotional distress, eventually freaking out and screaming inarticulately. It's a bizarre scene, and hard to know how to respond to - there are obvious parallels with the subway sequence in **POSSESSION**, and both challenge the viewer's complacency with a blurring of distinction between performance and genuine loss of control. The insistence in both films upon women dredging themselves to meet an exhortation to produce - particularly **POSSESSION**, where the actress is filmed actually being sick - reminds me of the current fad in hard-core porn for female ejaculation. The photographer in these scenes maintains a distant composure until his subject becomes distressed. Then, stunned surprise turns to what may be wordless guilt, before he falls to the ground as if suffering a heart attack.

If it was guilt, it has been rejected by the time of their next encounter. Still alive, he scornfully poses his model nude to the strains of a grand, liturgical piece by Mozart. This time it is the voyeur 'artist' who freaks out, his exploitative secret bursting from him as he stuffs wads of crumpled francs into Kaprisky's mouth and, out of frame, her snatch. Earlier, opening an envelope whilst the photographer was unconscious, she saw for the first time the photos he'd been taking. We see her examine the pictures, none of which have included her head in the frame. Zulawski cleverly announces a differing perspective for his camera, as our view of the prints is in reverse through the backlit paper, with Kaprisky's face above and behind, looking at the fetishized and impersonal images of her truncated form.

Images, both moving and still, are constantly being juxtaposed in the larger image-frame of the film. Not as extreme in this as Godard's **2 OR 3 THINGS I KNOW ABOUT HER**, which often resembles a demented scrapbook collage of the ubiquitous surfaces thrown up by media-proliferation, it nonetheless insists on eradicating casual consumption by making images matter to the characters. On each of several occasions when Kaprisky glances at a TV screen, the image has significance to her; sometimes acutely, such as the news report of Wilson's car-crash. One image causes her to cry out and drop the bag she'd been holding. Another provokes a wordless screeching. And the significance of still images, magazine covers (A *Cahiers du Cinema* issue even) is constantly drawn into dialogue between the characters. **LA FEMME PUBLIQUE** is relentlessly pictorial, even down to the choice of an over-dressed Dostoevsky adaptation as the film-within-the-film.

Existing in a highly excited state of over-stimulation, Zulawski's characters have to shout and scream to be heard over the ferocious buzz of a culture hypostatized in a convulsive urge to depict, represent, speak. But when signifiers no longer relate back to a signified or referent, no speech act can achieve its literal end. There's always more. Like the contemporary credo "Express Yourself", words don't express 'things', just 'communication'; the horror of language as babble, fuzz, static. In the bedroom of the megalomaniac film director, a TV tuned to rolling static soundlessly radiates through a sheet of newspaper taped over the screen. Two layers of newsprint lit by the chaotic blizzard of television...

Well you've got to laugh... Zulawski is like Jodorowsky in this respect. During the Dostoevsky rehearsals, a particu-

larly gnomish 'actor' accompanies a scene of ranting psychodrama on the piano, hammering close-knit Schoenbergisms from it. Banging further and further up the scale leads him inexorably to slapstick, as his fingers crunch down painfully on the piano-frame. Off-the-scale and out-of-keys! Compared to Zulawski, many film-makers are still playing "Chopsticks".

Stephen Thrower

FIVE DOLLS FOR AN AUGUST MOON
aka **CINQUE BAMBOLE PER LA LUNA D'AGOSTO / ISLAND OF TERROR**
Italy, 1970

director: **Mario Bava**
screenplay: **Mario di Nardo**
director of photography: **Antonio Rinaldi**
editor: **Mario Bava**
music: **Piero Umiliani**
producer: **Luigi Alessi**

Cast: **William Berger** (Professor Gerry Farrell), **Ira Fürstenberg** [Virginia De Fürstenberg] (Trudy Farrell), **Edwige Fenech** (Marie Chaney), **Hélène Ronée** (Peggy Davidson), **Edith Meloni** (Jill Stark), **Justine Gall** [Ely Galleani] (Isabelle), **Howard Ross** [Renato Rossini] (Jack Davidson), **Teodoro** [Agrimì] **Corrà** (George Stark), **Maurice Poli** (Nick Chaney), **Mauro Bosco** (Charles, the Guardian).

In between the problem-bound sex comedy **FOUR TIMES THAT NIGHT** and the gory body-count movie **TWITCH OF THE DEATH NERVE**, Bava churned out this turgid murder mystery for the same company that produced his **ROY COLT AND WINCHESTER JACK**. By his own admission the weakest film he ever made, **FIVE DOLLS** is a confused rehash of Agatha Christie's *"The Ten Little Indians"*. Even a good cast featuring such exploitation favourites as Fenech, Berger and Ross, plus the added spice of aristocratic gossip-column darling Fürstenberg, can't save this one.

The script by P.A.C.'s in-house writer di Nardo, who also provided the screenplay for **ROY COLT**, is a thorough exploration of the word 'banal'. Bava's lack of interest is reflected in the Francoesque somnambulism of his direc-

tion, which only approaches the inventive visual quality of his better work in a few brief scenes. For most of its length, the film is bogged down with muddled exposition, not helped by an ineffectual 'twist' ending which Bava tacked on as a way of avenging himself on the producers for lumbering him with such boring material. Similarly, the relationships between some of the characters are never properly clarified and it becomes difficult keeping track of who's who.

The plot concerns a group of wealthy businessmen who gather, along with their respective wives, in a plush villa on a remote island. They are hoping to persuade the chemist Gerry Farrell (Berger), to sell his formula for a revolutionary synthetic resin. He refuses, and soon various members of the party are found murdered in a variety of grisly ways. In the end it is Farrell who is revealed to be the culprit, although he has been presumed to have been shot dead half way through. His accomplice Isabelle (Gall), the daughter of the island's caretaker, takes the cheques intended for the business deal and departs for Switzerland, leaving him in jail, awaiting sentence.

Despite the fact that he had never been defeated by indifferent scripts before, Bava seems to have given up hope on **FIVE DOLLS**. That said, however, the rare occasions when he summons up enough enthusiasm to create something watchable are definitely worth the wait. One outstanding scene consists of dozens of glass globes rolling down a stone spiral staircase. These come to rest in a luxurious bathroom where a woman (Meloni) has just slashed her own wrists. Another highlight occurs at the beginning of the picture when a macabre joke is played on the guests at a party. The host (Corrà), wearing a bizarre demon mask, distributes knives among his friends. He tells them that he intends to sacrifice a virgin to an obscure pagan deity, but suddenly the room is plunged into darkness and a scream pierces the air. When the lights come back on, Mary (Fenech) is discovered with a dagger embedded in her stomach. It's only a charade, of course, but the scene pre-empts Mary's actual demise later in the movie.

The Algerian born Fenech, subsequently to enliven such cheesy epics as Sergio Martino's **BIG JOANNA WITH THE LONG THIGHS** and Andrea Bianchi's **STRIP NUDE FOR YOUR KILLER**, seems to hold a special fascination for Bava. In the opening scene we see her performing a frenzied dance, and the relentless high-speed zooms which thrust us towards her scantily clad, gyrating torso take on a strongly

sexual significance. Later on, Bava focuses attention on a bra she has left on the bed, and when her corpse is found tied to a tree, gives full reign to his celebrated necrophiliac camera. His use of the frame causes her voluptuous figure to take on the semblance of a religious martyr and briefly evokes the chilling delight in suffering that permeated the luscious **BLOOD AND BLACK LACE**.

Unfortunately, the effectiveness of moments like these is vitiated by the over-use of ugly 'talking head' shots and some inappropriate sub-Batman zip-panning. The creation of atmosphere is further hampered by Umiliani's utterly dire, travelogue-like score. No amount of claves and bongos can improve what basically sounds like the *Wish You Were Here* theme played on the *Sale of the Century* organ! Only the childishly sinister fairground music which accompanies the hanging of the corpses in the cold storage room has any impact at all, and this soon wears thin after being repeated for the umpteenth time. Also, although the trendy art direction is quite attractive, the lacklustre mayhem would perhaps have been enhanced if placed in a more ominously baroque setting.

Thankfully, **FIVE DOLLS FOR AN AUGUST MOON** proved to be only a temporary artistic setback for Bava. His next film, **TWITCH OF THE DEATH NERVE**, handled the theme of an escalating series of murders in a much more explicit fashion. The story by Franco (sometimes Francesco) Barbieri and the ubiquitous Dardano Sacchetti reflected Bava's love of the classics, being closer to a revenge tragedy than a whodunit. As Tim Lucas points out, however, in his excellent Bava retrospective (*Fangoria*, issues 42 and 43), the overall tone is more Tex Avery than Middleton and Kydd! The Italian maestro's subsequent pictures, ranging from the morbidly lyrical **LISA AND THE DEVIL** to the sometimes graphically violent **SHOCK**, confirmed that his visual instincts were still as sharp as ever. Even a piece of 'penny-dreadful' hokum like **BARON BLOOD** emerges as a menacingly atmospheric opus, loaded with swirling fog and eerie lighting effects. Unfortunately, a potentially interesting feature called "Roots of Fear" - which was to be co-directed with his son Lamberto - was dropped when producer Turi Vasile backed out at the last minute.

Mark Ashworth

Addenda: I wrote this review after seeing an aged, discoloured print of the film at the Scala Cinema in London in the 1980s.

Needless to say really, but a couple of good quality video releases and an excellent DVD release down the line, I've been forced to revise my opinion. While I still think the story degenerates into an incomprehensible mess, this film has a lot more going for it than I was capable of recognising at the time. Look for my review of the DVD on Amazon. I've even got several tracks from the soundtrack on CD! However, let me say this: if John Lydon can talk favourably in interviews about the Queen's golden jubilee, I can change my mind about a film and bollocks to the lot of you, quite frankly... (Mark Ashworth, 2003).

FOUR TIMES THAT NIGHT

aka **QUANTE VOLTE... QUELLA NOTTE**

Italy/West Germany/USA, 1968 (shooting) 1972 (Italian release)

director: **Mario Bava**

screenplay: **Mario Moroni, Charles Ross**

director of photography: **Antonio Rinaldi**

editor: **Otello Colangeli**

music: **Lallo (Coriolano) Gori**

producer: **Alfredo Leone**

Cast: **Daniela Giordano** (Tina Brandt), **Brett Halsey** (Gianni/John Price), **Dick Randall** (Duccio, the janitor), **Valeria Sabel** (Mrs Brandt, Tina's mother), **Michael Hinz** (Rudy/Giorgio), **Rainer Basedow** (Jack), **Brigitte Skay** [**Brigitte Riedle**] (Mumu), **Calisto Calisti** (the scientist), **Pascale Petit** (Esmeralda, a fashion photographer).

John (Brett Halsey) and Tina (Daniela Giordano) meet in the park while he is cruising in his sports car and she is walking her dog. That night, they go out dancing then head back to his place. In Gianni's apartment complex, the doorman (Dick Randall) is a voyeur and the neighbours are swinging homosexuals Giorgio (Michael Hinz) and Esmeralda (Pascale Petit). During the evening Tina's dress gets torn and Gianni's forehead scratched. This story is told, as indicated by the neatly misleading title, four different ways, with separate and irreconcilable explanations for injuries to dress and face.

First we have Tina's version, in which she is virginal and virtuous and Gianni is a lecher who compares himself to Dracula. Here, the dress is torn in an attempted rape and the face scratched in heroic resistance. The upshot is that

Gianni is locked in his own bathroom and Tina escapes to tell her mother (Valeria Sabel) about her near-escape. Then Gianni brags to his clubbing mates a version in which Tina (and her mother) are hot-to-trot sluts and he is a shy, decent sort who just happens to be irresistible to all women ("*why doesn't that happen to me?*" complains one of his friends, only for Gianni cruelly to point out "*because you're fat*"). In this account, the dress and face are damaged in the heat of passion.

Duccio the Doorman - longtime exploitation producer Randall doing Benny Hill or James Coco very badly - tells his milkman friend a third version, in which Tina is keen on Gianni, but Gianni is extravagantly gay and repairs to the bedroom with Giorgio, leaving Esmeralda to seduce the reluctant Tina with an anecdote (yes, a story within a story) about her involvement with a photo-model (Brigitte Skay) and a doctored drink. The dress and the face get torn as Tina escapes from the den of degenerates, but the doorman has to run off to fetch his binoculars at 'the best bit' and is thus cheated (along with the audience) out of most of the action.

So far, so **RASHOMON**, with Duccio providing the 'objective' viewpoint given by the drunken tramp in the Kurosawa film, making all the participants out to be ridiculous and self-serving. But, in an unusual twist, the narrative is then taken over by a pompous, false-bearded psychiatrist first seen in solarised footage during the animated credits. He shows off Rorschach butterflies and muses on the accounts of Noah's Ark that might be given by various animals, then presents a fourth, idealised story of the night in which Gianni and Tina are sincere people clearly on the first date of a lasting relationship, and the injuries come when he has to help her climb over a gate because the doorman is too involved in leching to unstick a faulty lock.

Very much the poor relation in Mario Bava's filmography, this embraces two especially despised Italian genres - low comedy and sexploitation. However, it turns out to be quite an entertaining little picture, certainly funnier than his **DR GOLDFOOT AND THE GIRL BOMBS** and with moments of genuine sweetness or eroticism (Bava's huge close-ups of kissing faces or bare skin are effective). Its real appeal, though, comes from its **DIABOLIK**-on-a-budget art direction, costume design and 1968 semi-psychedelia.

It's hard not to laugh out loud in astonishment at Gianni's stud briefs or (in his gay role) ruffled burgundy shirt, and connoisseurs will relish his make-out pad, with its

inflatable orange chairs (you can buy them in Islington again now), white box cocktail cabinet, cushioned floor and ice cream block of a bed ("*it's like the pedestal of the statue of Garibaldi*"). Esmeralda's blonde curly wig and black flared catsuit with a vent in the back and Tina's blue shorty dress with chain-ring cleavage-covering also hit the style spot. Esmeralda's flashback features an all-girl band whipping a middle-aged homosexual in a bizarre nightclub act and hilarious dialogue from Skay ("*men all try to touch my bottom ... it's just because I'm Swiss-German*"). Bava suggests his attitude to all this when he has the shrink step in by seemingly picking up Gianni's car like a toy and putting all the playthings back in their boxes.

The **RASHOMON** concept must have seemed a natural for porno-comedy-chic, but Bava (deliberately?) subverts and makes fun of it. Tina doesn't start telling her mother the story until we have seen half of it in supposedly objective fashion (her soon-abandoned stream-of-consciousness voice-over suggests she is more impressed by the price of Gianni's car than anything else about him), Gianni's tale contains subjective shots from Tina's viewpoint (she looks through a red glass and imagines Gianni stripping down), the doorman's version includes a literally swinging POV from Esmeralda as she lusts after Tina from a playground swing dangling in Gianni's flat, so all of the realities on view are subjective, debatable, contested and inconsistent. It may well be too hurried to be actual cleverness, but it is still a wild ride.

Kim Newman

FREAK ORLANDO

Germany, 1981

writer/director/photography: **Ulrike Ottinger**

editor: **Dört Völz**

music: **Wilhelm D. Siebert**

producer: **Renée Gundelach, Ulrike Ottinger**

cast: **Eddie Constantine** (Säulenheiliger), **Magdalena Montezuma** (Orlando), **Delphine Seyrig** (Helena Müller), **Albert Heins** (Herbert Zeus), **Else Nabu** (Heilige Wilgeforte), **Jacque Raynal** (Twin sister), **Galli** (Chronistin), **Waltraud Klotz** (Bearded Woman with Accordeon), **Claudio Pantoja** (dancer), **Hiro Uschiyama** (dancer).

Attended by a woman buried up to the waist in the sand of a wintry beach, and marked with a shabby neon sign, is the entrance to Freak City. Inside, the atmosphere is part trade fair, part shopping mall, part awards ceremony. A woman with a mechanical third eye in her conical black hat repairs shoes with a giant metal hammer. "*What the bloody fuck is going on?*", asks someone in English. The three-eyed woman leads a party of dwarves into the countryside - they enter a large tree trunk through a side door. Following them are a motley bunch clad in polythene wrap, led by a woman with an Elsa Lanchester hair-do. A pair of leather-queens 'shoot' each other with kiddies' rayguns. Nearby, a witch stirs a potion in her tupperware cauldron, before a gutted modern gas cooker.

Back inside the tree, the interior of which resembles a waterlogged Roman temple, the dwarves have dressed up in American football outfits. The three-eyed woman teams up with the Lanchester hair-do and they lead the dwarves outside again. Soon they encounter a man with a neon heart who topples from his pedestal in the middle of an ornamental pond. A passing troupe of male self-flagellators, capering in black lace, attack the party and put the neon-hearted man inside a portable spiral prison. He's then transported to an imposing high-tech' power station, the residence of a King and Queen who like to laugh at pictures of freaks. They throw a party - the captors torment their prisoner whilst a two-headed woman is called to sing for them. She sounds just like Dagmar Krause.

Later, after some obscure goings-on at the beach, a Distressed Woman realizes that her elaborate costume is in fact a device for restraining her. Tied to a wall, she is rescued by two monks who promptly cover her head with a bin-liner. Joining up with a tiny bell-shaped woman and a nude dwarf painted the same colours as his huge dalmation dog, they come upon a terrible place. Giant vats contain torture victims tied in horrible agony and left to suffer. The monks and the bell-shaped woman turn suddenly nasty and hand over the Distressed Woman to a squad of leather-clad goons (think **DESPERATE LIVING**), who take her away on a train made of old hospital beds on wheels, trundling noisily down a deserted suburban street. A variety of other odd creatures are also rounded up. After a visual tribute to **PINK FLAMINGOS** and a gaudy production number for people on crutches, the film 'climaxes' with a sort of vaudeville contest held in a big ornamental garden. Then it's back off to the beach location that opened the film, and goodbye to Freak City.

FREAK ORLANDO reads like a good idea on paper, doesn't it? The above synopsis should alert most lovers of extreme weirdness to a veritable feast. Sadly, what meal there is here is served up by a cast of amateurish pseudo-loons, apparently instructed by the director to act like a nauseating 'experimental' Dance troupe. I need only mention the word 'mime' to describe how teeth-grindingly annoying this movie gets. And, although some of the trouble I had with the film may be due to watching it without subtitles, it seems obvious that the film is meant to work principally on the visual level. So...

FREAK ORLANDO recalls the films of Alejandro Jodorowsky in its densely packed visual excess and relentless obscurantism. But Jodorowsky's movies are souped up with his obsessive taste for violence and multi-levelled depictions of metaphysical conflict. His grotesque visual carnivals are never left to wander aimlessly into whimsy. **FREAK ORLANDO**'s mood is often whimsical in the extreme, robbing what I would tentatively guess is its 'Odyssey' structure of any forward energy. It's also terribly pleased with itself, the camera often lingering unnecessarily on some bloated eccentricity of design. Jodorowsky's **HOLY MOUNTAIN** is persistently bizarre scene-by-scene but one never feels him lingering over his astounding tableaux seeking the audience's admiration. **FREAK ORLANDO** gives this impression constantly, which inspires more irritation than awe.

Certain images do impress, not least the Dalmation dwarf and the torture vat scenes, so typically German in their unsettling S&M imagery. Generally though, I was reminded more of Tom Burman's **LIFE ON THE EDGE**. **FREAK ORLANDO**, like **LIFE ON THE EDGE**, thinks it's freakier than it really is. The closest to *really* strange that it gets is when it fleetingly resembles an 'Art Movie' as made by Andy Milligan. For the remainder, the director seems unaware that, as Mark E. Smith sings on The Fall's 'Totally Wired', "*Y'don't have to be weird to be weird.*"

Stephen Thrower

Addendum: Arriving out of the blue and disappearing back into it as far as English-speaking audiences were concerned, **FREAK ORLANDO** met with a terse and irritable version of yours truly in *Eyeball* #3. It was also one of those occasions where I opted to review a foreign film, without subtitles, in a language I don't speak. Trying to keep abreast

of strange cinema from around the world, I occasionally ventured into this practise, something I would avoid in print now, if only for my own sake. Anyway, as the review notes, **FREAK ORLANDO** is a very visual work and my negative response was based purely on visuals and the style of performance. However, if you'd like to seek out this film despite my impatient assessment, here is some long overdue, less opinionated background information.

Ottinger's web-site (<http://www.ulrikeottinger.com>) offers this description:

*"In the form of a "small theater of the world", **FREAK ORLANDO** is a history of the world from its beginnings to our day, including the errors, the incompetence, the thirst for power, the fear, the madness, the cruelty and the commonplace, in a story of five episodes."*

After living as a painter and photographer in Paris in the early 1960s, Ulrike Ottinger wrote her first script 'Die mongolische Doppelschubblade' in 1966. Since 1973 she has lived in Berlin where she has produced many films, alongside theatre work, exhibitions and books. Her films include: **LOACON & SONS** (1972-3), **BERLIN FEVER** (1973), **THE ENCHANTMENT OF THE BLUE SAILORS** (1975), **MADAME X - AN ABSOLUTE RULER** (1977), **TICKET OF NO RETURN** (1979), **THE IMAGE OF DORIAN GRAY IN THE YELLOW PRESS** (1983-4) and **JOHANNA D'ARC OF MONGOLIA** (1988-9) - the latter a merging of fictional and documentary forms. Her most recent works are **THE BLOOD COUNTESS** (2000), an 'ironic foray into the vampire film' starring Nina Hagen and Udo Kier, and **DIAMOND DANCE**, dealing with AIDS, the Shoah, and the international diamond industry (!).

"Ottinger's films explore a world of difference defined by the tension and transfer between settled and nomadic cultures. Ottinger's sense of this cultural transfer informs her documentary and her feature films. It is what marks the stations of her encounter with the other, whether recognizably exotic or simply but subtly unpredictable. Nomadic cultures - archaic or modern - occupy a margin where reality, the future, or the other uncontrollably begins. Metamorphosis and allegory are, accordingly, hallmarks of Ottinger's visual language."

Laurence A. Rickels, author of *The Autobiography of Cinema*, a study of Ulrike Ottinger's films.

FURY OF THE WOLFMAN

aka **LA FURIA DEL HOMBRE LOBO** /

WOLFMAN NEVER SLEEPS

Spain, 1971

director: **José Maria Zabalza**

screenplay: **Jacinto Molina**

director of photography: **Leopoldo Villaseñor**

editors: **Sebastián Herranz, Luis Álvarez**

music: **Rafael Arteaga, Ana Satrova**

producer:

Cast: **Paul Naschy** [Jacinto Molina] (Waldemar Daninsky), **Perla Cristal** (Ilona/Eva Wolfstein), **Verónica Luján** (Karen), **Mark Stevens** (reporter), **Michael Rivers** [Miguel de la Riva], **Francisco Amorós**, **Fabián Conde**, **Ramón Lillo**, **Javier Riva**, **Pilar Zorrilla**.

*'When the heliotrope starts growing among rough rocks
And the full moon shines at night
In a certain area of the Earth
A man turns into a wolf ...'*

In its retro-frenzy, **LA FURIA DEL HOMBRE LOBO** opens with a voice-over intoning a rhyme, as featured in 40s werewolf epics like **THE WOLF MAN** or **THE UNDYING MONSTER**, though no further reference is made to it, and there's no explanation of what a heliotrope has to do with anything. We're back in Waldemar Daninsky land, that phantom zone presided over by the barrel-chested Paul Naschy and his screen-writing alter ego Jacinto Molina. Here, the clichés of 1940s Universal Famous Monster sequels jostle with a post-nouvelle vague Iberia, squeezed from widescreen onto grainy video, with medallions and eyesore shirts a-plenty, as music segues from stock horror themes to sub-muzak burbling. Like most of Naschy's werewolf series, it plays like a sequel to something but seems to be a new story, even as it recycles plot points not only from **THE WEREWOLF OF LONDON** but Naschy's earlier **LAS NOCHES DEL HOMBRE LOBO**. Our bewildered hero is already afflicted with the curse of the werewolf at the outset, scarred by the mark of the pentagram (actually, it's a pentangle) on his chest.

'Professor' or 'Doctor' (no one seems sure which) Waldemar (or 'Walterman') Daninsky is the sole survivor

of an expedition to Tibet during which he has picked up the curse. He returns to a university in an unidentified country where obvious Spaniards have American or Eastern European names to find his wife Erika has been unfaithful. He confides his lycanthropic and domestic problems to exactly the wrong woman, Ilona Wolfstein (Cristal). She is the daughter of a mad scientist thought dead but who is lurking about in a white mask resembling the one worn by Herbert Lom in Hammer's **PHANTOM OF THE OPERA**, encouraging her to continue his experiments in mind control through 'chemotroids'.

Waldemar survives an economical car crash (close-ups of his panicked face and spinning wheels, a fast-approaching tree in subjective shot, crash noise over a calm blue sky) which the police think is a murder attempt (*"There's a killer, there must also be a victim. Our problem now is to find them both"*). On a rainy night, he wolfs out to kill Erika and her lover only to die himself by picking up a live electricity cable that happens to be lying in a graveyard during the storm. Ilona tells cute student Karen she knows Waldemar is only temporarily dead, then hires body-snatchers to dig him up so she can make a slave of the werewolf. Karen serves as a back-up heroine since the higher-billed women are both evil bitches, though her choice of company is usually not prudent.

Ilona works out her grudges by enslaving not only the wolfman but the chemotroid-controlled hippies she keeps chained in the basement of her ancestral home. Waldemar and Karen try to escape: Naschy swings an axe into the hippies and fights with the masked madman. Dr Wolfstein is pitched over some banisters to a proper death, and turns out - gasp - to be hideously scarred under his mask. A nosy reporter (Stevens) does a great bit of sleuthing by asking the bar-tender if he knows anything and is told Ilona is the daughter of the mad Dr Wolfstein, which enables him to put it all together. Even more mad because of her father's death, Ilona chains Waldemar up and reveals she has unearthed and chemotroided Erika. Now a zombie and an infected werewolf, Erika turns into a monster and Ilona sets her on Karen, prompting Waldemar to transform and kill his wife again.

Ordered to slaughter Karen, Waldemar overcomes the chemotroids and attacks Ilona, carrying her to the top of the stairs and again uses his second-favourite murder method (after clawing and rending) by shoving her through obviously rickety banisters. Fatally wounded, she

finds a gun and shoots him, which suggests - pace her earlier remark that he can only be killed by another werewolf or a woman who loves him - that she has a soft spot for the hairy old brute. All the bad people die, littering the castle laboratory with corpses, and the police turn up to rescue Karen, who is escorted out into the sunshine by the nosy reporter as the cop on the case admires the weather.

While it lacks vampire hordes and surplus monsters, this entry is as straight-facedly insane in its werewolf vs mad scientist plotting as the rest of the series: **LA MARCA DEL HOMBRE LOBO, EL HOMBRE QUE VINO DEL UMMO, DR JEKYLL Y EL HOMBRE LOBO** and **LA NOCHE DE WALPURGIS**. Naschy earnestly plays stooge to Cristal, led by his nose through the plot while supporting characters figure things out. As usual, too many extra elements jostle for attention: a disfigured father, freaks in the cellar, 'chemotroids', the werewolf curse, Tibet, adulterous schemers. As a writer, Molina solves all story problems with ridiculous contrivances like that live wire in the graveyard or the clue-dispensing barman. It's sparse-looking, with most of the action confined to dingy streets and basements, and the plodding Zabalza is not the most imaginative director assigned to one of these monsterfests. Naschy strikes an earnest note early and sticks to it, displaying enthusiasm under the yak hair by loping and leaping, tragically unable to translate his obvious love of genre and need to be a horror star into anything like charisma or character acting. In a dud supporting cast, even the heavily mascara-masked Cristal's mad scientist act falls flat, while Lujan's brief bit as a wolf-woman is well below even **SHE WOLF OF LONDON** standards.

Somehow, it's ineffably sad that Naschy should want so desperately to be the Lon Chaney Jr of his generation, capering through these quickies even as the old Lon was lurching drunkenly through to his death in Al Adamson movies. The childishness of Naschy's straining after the faded glories of Universal is doggily pathetic and almost lovable, but his unironic fondness for hackneyed clichés (barely leavened by mild gore and bondage) is wearisome. Compounded by frankly unimaginative direction and (in the export version) tin eared dialogue, this attitude makes **LA FURIA...** hard-going even for the devoted. Others, *cave canem*.

Kim Newman

THE GERMAN CHAINSAW MASSACRE
 aka **DAS DEUTSCHE KETTENSAGEN MASSAKER**
 Germany, 1990

director/writer: **Christoph Schlingensief**
 directors of photography: **Voxi Bärenklau, Christoph Schlingensief**
 editor: **Ariane Traub**
 producer: **Christian Furst**

Cast: **Karina Fallenstein** (Clara), **Suzanne Bredehoft**, **Artur Albrecht**, **Volker Spengler**, **Alfred Edel**, **Brigitte Kausch**, **Dietrich Kuhlbrodt**, **Udo Kier**, **Eva-Maria Kurz** (Zöllnerin).

The American splatter movie and the German art film have an odd interrelationship, most succinctly expressed by Fassbinder protégé Ulli Lommel's shift from one (**The Tenderness of Wolves**) to the other (**The Boogey Man**). Schlingensief, whose impulse for political analysis is couched in images from the meat market of American gore movies, is technically a middle of the road figure. The extremes of German Horror Art are defined by the amateurish ketchup-sloshing of Andreas Schnaas (**Zombie '90: Extreme Pestilence**) or Jorg Buttgerit (by whom I remain unconvinced) in one corner and the more ascetic, thoughtful and downbeat work of Eckhart Schmidt (**Trance**) or (the Austrian) Michael Haneke (**Benny's Video**). These film-makers all take bodily dismemberment and video flicker as their central images, recycling elements of horror movies they have presumably only seen on video, making pictures that seem fifth-generation pirate dupes even in theatrical releases.

Opening with newsreel footage that establishes the time frame of the first hours of German reunification (*"in free self-administration we want to accomplish Germany's unity and freedom,"* witters a speech), Schlingensief presents statistics about the flood of former East Germans into the West with the dismantling of the Berlin Wall, claiming 4% have disappeared. Then we meet Clara (Fallenstein), the *de facto* heroine, an 'Ostie' who murders a molester (either a cross-dresser or an actress playing a male role) in a toilet and heads for the border in her Trabant. Her boyfriend tries to rape her on a mattress, claiming that time is running out, and a lunatic (Spengler) in a yellow macintosh and German helmet with sausage wings stuck to it

intervenes to batter the boy's skull in (he later turns up with a concave head, still ranting). Clara runs off, appealing for help from a couple who initially don't want to get involved but then turn out to be part of a cannibal family who specialise in way-laying Osties and recycling them as wurst.

As the title suggests, Schlingensief pays homage to Tobe Hooper's **THE TEXAS CHAIN SAW MASSACRE** with his cannibal family, though he also gets a lick in from **PSYCHO** in cannibal chieftain Alfred (Edel) who relays orders from 'father', a skeleton. In a fairly neat joke, it is blatantly obvious from the first that Alfred is talking to himself, providing a shrill voice for 'father'. Clara is molested by the clan's lesbian daughter (Bredehoft), who winds up with a knife in her rectum, and a pair of grasping Osties (on their way to move in with, sponge off and possibly murder a long-lost Aunt in the West) are subjected to the Hooper treatment, pursued by chainsaw loons and cut into pieces (*"but we are one people now,"* pleads a victim). In a dream, Udo Kier turns up as a Nazi with a Hitler moustache made of a painted-on swastika. The cannibal mother is run over and cut in half, but lives to rant on at length. Clara survives to jump in the back of a passing truck, like Marilyn Burns in **CHAIN SAW**, but Edel and 'father' are driving. Everybody screams.

Schlingensief has claimed *"it's all irony, of course, you can easily see that the violence is not real. There are a few disgusting scenes, yes; but they are artistically made comments on what unification has done to this country."* Admittedly, it's easier to see a political point in the film's Rorschach blots of splatter than it is to find any content in **NEKROMANTIK**, but the hysterical, anything-for-offence tone (which owes a lot to John Waters' **DESPERATE LIVING**) makes all the swastikas, TV news footage and Trabi trashing play as footnotes to screaming, farcical carnage. More to the point, it's a bit overfamiliar even as mock horror (though the production values are okay for its budget level) and the tongue-protruding, eye-rolling madmen aren't actually very comical creations. Perhaps the film needs to take more seriously its capitalist cannibals' slogan, which they chant as they batter an Ostie into frankfurter meat: *"In times when everything is possible it is important if something is good or bad"*.

Kim Newman

THE GESTAPO'S LAST ORGY
 aka **L'ULTIMA ORGIA DEL III REICH /**
CALIGULA REINCARNATED AS HITLER
 Italy, 1976

director: **Cesare Canevari**
 screenplay: **Antonio Lucarella**
 director of photography: **Claudio Catozzo**
 editor: **Enzo Monachesi**
 music: **Alberto Baldan Bembo**

Cast: **Marc Loud** (Commandant Conrad von Starker),
Daniela Levy [Poggi] (Lisa), **Maristella Greco** (Alma),
Fulvio Ricciardi, **Antineska Nemour**, **Caterina Barbero**,
Domenico Serengai, **Vittorio Joderi**, **Pietro Bosco**, **Renato**
Peracchi.

In comparison with the rest of the 'Nazploitation' sub-genre, **THE GESTAPO'S LAST ORGY** can boast a fraction of intelligence and at times attempts a seriousness the other entries in this area couldn't muster between them. Canevari does at least seem acquainted with the (misappropriated) literary roots of fascism, unlike (Canadian) Don Edmonds whose **ILSA, SHE WOLF OF THE SS** is all Yank bravado and no brains. Sections of dialogue display familiarity with the writings of the Marquis de Sade, and any 'exploitation film' with the audacity to quote Nietzsche in its opening credits deserves some notice! This was no doubt little more than an attempt to cop some spurious respectability from Liliana Cavanis's **THE NIGHT PORTER**, but rather this than **ILSA**'s hypocritical pre-credit caption which burbles "*the makers of this film... hope that these terrible events will never happen again.*" Hence the sequels, eh guys? Nietzsche has suffered from having the aphoristic structure of many of his best known works exploited by people eager to embrace fragments of his writings out of context, so the quote in the film's credits, "*When the Superman wishes to amuse himself, he may do so, even at the cost of the life of others*" would be irrelevant, were it not a good comment on the limits of Fascist understanding.

Five years after being acquitted of alleged war-crimes, an ex-Nazi officer (Loud) drives out to the death camp he used to run. He is meeting Lisa (Levy), who we learn was once a prisoner under his control. The film then shows in a prolonged series of flashbacks how Loud gradually became obsessed with his victim and her refusal to beg or scream for

mercy when tortured. Such stoicism obviously frustrates a sadist, and he reacts to his impotence by falling into worshipful adoration. We discover that Lisa's resolve has its source in her mistaken belief that she was responsible for the death of her family at the hands of the Nazis, and the subsequent guilt has taken away her will to live. When she is told of her innocence by a doctor with access to her file, her first thoughts are naturally of revenge. Perceiving that the officer has fallen in love with her, she strings him along until after the war when she will have the opportunity to kill him.

Production values are high, and Canevari musters a few surprisingly atmospheric compositions. Wide-angle shots of the deserted, post-war 'love-camp', its one-time 'death-wing' now just a few filthy tunnels hung with cobwebs and overgrown by weeds, are followed later by a bizarre sequence in which we see these same tunnels deployed. A group of naked women, mainly the old, overweight, pregnant and deformed, run screaming as overhead gas jets belch flames over their distorted bodies. These images, seen only briefly, are nightmarish in a way not usually encountered in the 'Nazi' cycle of films, depicting as they do victims far more realistic than the Barbie-doll t&a normally on show. As noted, we are not in a genuine death-camp, but a 'love-camp' or brothel for the purpose of helping exhausted, sex-starved soldiers relax and gain morale at the expense of the female prisoners. In another untypical sequence, we see a line of naked German soldiers furtively groping themselves and each other, whilst being shown slides of 'Jewish' women performing perverse acts such as coprophilia and lesbian incest to demonstrate the 'decadent inferiority' of their race.

The love camp location is necessary, of course, to ensure the requisite number of attractive young bimbos, and cuts out any 'unexploitable' elements such as skeletal old men tottering around covered in sores. We are after all dealing principally with heterosexual S&M fantasy, given that extra bit of piquancy by the Nazi fancy-dress and the occasional hints of perverse, polysexual goings-on. As usual, none of the assembled cast display any hint of Jewish physiognomy at all, the heroine instead resembling some unfortunate splicing of Karen Black and Agnetha Fältskog from ABBA! As for the soldiers, at least none are quite so blatantly Mediterranean as the swarthy Latin male-models posing their way through Sergio Garrone's **SS EXPERIMENT CAMP**. The dialogue manages to be engagingly

lurid, supplemented by some fiendish gloating from the obligatory Nazi lesbian, who of course indulges in displays of dominatrix Naziness with men too, for the benefit of those in the audience for whom being caught masturbating by mummy was a pivotal point in sexual development. And Loud, who plays a bastardised Bogarde to Levy's Rampling, puts in a performance which tries to steer clear of the Dick Dastardly histrionics generally exhibited in these movies.

There are some distinct minus points, chiefly the cloying title music which pops up again later to accompany the one truly nauseating moment in the film. Our glassy-eyed heroine has a prolonged bout of bovine 'love-making' with that other death-camp staple, the liberal and guilt-ridden doctor. Like the similar 'healthy' sex scene in Ken Russell's **CRIMES OF PASSION**, it only serves to make one grateful for the pleasures of 'warped' sexuality! In cruder terms of atrocities-per-reel, Canevari seems to forget such genre considerations after the repellant 'Joy of Sex' interlude, fobbing us off instead with Loud and Levy floating around on a lake in some sort of punt, and there are those who would say that no amount of arty camerawork can compensate for an absence of tasteless torture scenes. Nonetheless, Cesare Canevari would seem worth keeping an eye out for. That is if he was ever allowed to make another film after suspending women upside down over live rats until they vomit, burning them, dropping them down slides into a quicklime bath and throwing in mass rape, castration, coprophilia and humiliating nudity, albeit well photographed and culminating with a suitably vengeful (femme) finale.

Stephen Thrower

Addendum: So far, none of the principal Italian Nazi-horror films has been released on DVD, although the campy **ILSA** films are available. It seems they're still a bit too hot to handle, even in these days of default cynicism and cult overload... Canevari would go on to make only one more film (apart from **LA PRINCIPESSA NUDA** which he directed the same year as **GESTAPO**). **DELITTO CARNALE** (1983) is a sexy thriller made very much on the cheap: according to *giallo* expert Adrian Luther Smith it combines the kitschiness of Mario Bava's **FIVE DOLLS FOR AN AUGUST MOON** with the cut-price look of a Jess Franco movie.

HELL IS A CITY

UK, 1960

director: **Val Guest**

screenplay: **Val Guest** from a novel by **Maurice Proctor**

director of photography: **Arthur Grant**

editor: **James Needs**

music: **Stanley Black**

producer: **Michael Carreras**

cast: **Stanley Baker** (Inspector Martineau), **John Crawford** (Don Starlin), **Donald Pleasence** (Gus Hawkins), **Maxine Audley** (Julia Martineau), **Billie Whitelaw** (Chloe Hawkins), **Joseph Tomelty** (Furnisher Steele), **George A. Cooper** (Doug Savage), **Vanda Godsell** (Lucky Luske), **Geoffrey Frederick** (Devery), **Charles Houston** (Clogger Roach).

Val Guest's career in film puts most other people to shame, from Will Hay comedies in the 1930s to softcore bonk-fests such as **CONFESSIONS OF A WINDOW CLEANER** and **AU PAIR GIRLS** in the 1970s. Somewhere in between he found the time to direct some of the finest postwar British films - **THE DAY THE EARTH CAUGHT FIRE**, the first two **QUATERMASS** pictures and **HELL IS A CITY** - gritty, paranoid depictions of a country emerging from years of rationing and obedience to men in uniform light years removed from the smug and cosy world of Ealing comedies. Guest's stated aim at the time was to try and achieve the look of newsreel footage, drawing inspiration from the documentary realism of films such as Jules Dassin's 1948 noir classic **THE NAKED CITY**. Hammer might not at first glance seem to be the logical company to back such a project, but over the years they've taken the blame in the public imagination for all manner of rubbish churned out in the horror boom of the sixties by hacks the world over, so that to some people their name became a shorthand for Gothic melodrama of the most overblown kind. However, by the time **HELL IS A CITY** went into production in 1959 it was only the latest in a series of well made, pacy crime and suspense thrillers produced by the company over the previous ten years such as **THE LAST PAGE**, **FACE THE MUSIC** and **36 HOURS**. Val Guest had just shot **YESTERDAY'S ENEMY** for the company (also starring Stanley Baker), one of their World War 2 series which dispensed with all the flag waving and tried to show it up for the nasty little business it was.

Based on Maurice Proctor's 1954 crime novel of a botched robbery that turns into a murder hunt, **HELL IS A CITY** was shot as far as possible on the streets of Manchester and the surrounding moors, with its final reel showdown taking place on top of the Refuge Assurance Building in the centre of town. The picture had such an identifiable sense of place that *Picturegoer* magazine was already reporting in October 1959 - some months before the release - that local councillors were none too pleased about the way their city might be depicted: "*It'll put Manchester down as a grimy, dirty city...*". Now how on earth would anyone get that impression? Stanley Baker plays the hardman police inspector with a crumbling marriage and a softspot for the local barmaid in a way that owes precious little to *Dixon Of Dock Green*. Fresh from his cult success in **HELL DRIVERS**, Baker was fond of telling journalists that he wasn't afraid to defend himself in bar fights and of his sparring matches with his old friend Henry Cooper. Like the authentic street locations, he lends an air of credibility to the proceedings whether threatening witnesses in the interview room or wrestling with villains high up on city rooftops.

This is a morally ambiguous world where the police have drink problems, the murderers didn't set out with the intention of killing anyone and most of the community is happy to break the law either in illegal gambling schools or sheltering wanted criminals. The cast is awash with fine actors such as George A Cooper, Warren Mitchell, Donald Pleasence and Billie Whitelaw who help to break down the idea of the good guys against the bad. Pleasence's business has been robbed and one of his staff murdered, but his character comes across as such a slimy piece of work that he arouses little sympathy. Maxine Audley plays Baker's wife as a whining, irritating partner long since grown tired of her husband's irregular hours whose manner only serves to encourage him to head for the local bar rather than home at the end of a long shift. The barmaid played by Vanda Godsell who tries very hard to lead Stanley Baker astray isn't a clichéd glamour model but an older and more believable alternative wife who herself has dubious criminals in her past.

Beautifully shot in widescreen monochrome by Arthur Grant, the film never stays in any one place for too long. The opening shots though a car windscreen at night with its rain-blurred neon signs and edgy jazz score set the tone perfectly. From then on characters appear and disappear as the scene constantly changes so that what at first glance is a deceptively simple story of lone policeman hunting down

the bad boy killer comes across as a much more thought provoking and multi-layered work. By way of comparison, John Woo's **FACE/OFF** tackles a similar subject and manages to invest it with all the depth and resonance of a McDonalds advert. Unjustly overlooked and rarely shown on television, **HELL IS A CITY** is up there with the best of Val Guest's films, and a clear precursor to the hard-bitten realism of later British crime films such as **GET CARTER** and **VILLAIN**.

Max Décharné

HORROR RISES FROM THE TOMB
aka **EL ESPANTO SURGE DE LA TOMBA**
Spain, 1972

director: **Carlos Aured**
screenplay: **Jacinto Molina** aka **Paul Naschy**
director of photography: **Manuel Merino**
editor: **Javier Morán**
music: **Carmelo Bernaola**
producers: **Ricardo Muñoz Suay, José Antonio Pérez Giner**

Cast: **Paul Naschy** (Ulric du Marna), **Emma Cohen** (Elvira), **Vic Winner** [V́ctor Alcázar] (Maurice Roland), **Helga Liné** (Mabille DeLancré), **Cristina Suriani**, **Betsabé Ruiz**, **María José Cantudo**, **Julio Peña**, **Luis Ciges**, **Francisco Llinás**.

What is the strange compunction that drives one again and again to the celluloid smegma of Jacinto Molina? How is it that this pudgy little loser with all the charm and charisma of a mahogany mule can send one scurrying gleefully to the video, replete with the knowledge that another ninety minutes of torture lie in store (and boys, I've never been known to espouse *any* form of *self-torture*...) Well, it beats the shit out of me, pal. I'd venture to make the point that even Paulie's crowning glories (**THE HUNCHBACK OF THE MORGUE**, **THE WEREWOLF'S SHADOW** - a personal favourite - and **COUNT DRACULA'S GREAT LOVE**) are riddled with ineptitude, fraught with turgid dialogue and endless shots of Naschy's wobbly torso, long sequences consisting of 'actors' staring into The Void awaiting some final cataclysmic revelation (like, maybe, direction...?) and sundry attendant pitfalls of the terminally appalling. But so what? I might complain, but

I've watched some Naschy trash, particularly the delirious **DRACULA, THE TERROR OF THE LIVING DEAD** and **VENGEANCE OF THE ZOMBIES**, more times than any sane person would care to admit.

Anyway, here Naschy stars as a XVth century knight whose decapitated head returns to make life an even greater misery for the viewer, swinging artist Vic Winner and bad Naschy's own descendant (hey, there's little more satisfying than a Naschy movie where the great man gets to play two parts!). For 'narratively slim' reasons, a group of only-just-photogenic human beings decide to hang around in the ancestral ruins and dig up some shit, in this case the head and body of Paulie-boy. There's plenty of Bernaolo's characteristic barrel-organ bleating to accompany the senseless scenario, and if the organ-grinder had a monkey, I know who I'd like to see in the starring role! An old man goes nuts with a sickle. People get possessed. People get abducted. People get hacked up real bad (given that the effects are executed with Playdoh and ketchup), and Naschy's head sits on a table (shades of **THEY SAVED HITLER'S BRAIN**) Paulie gets to take his shirt off! Zombies wander. Some Naschy or other is chased around with a medallion. More 'gore' killings occur (though anyone lured into Molinaland by misrepresentative advertising apparently heralding a 'gore' film deserve all they receive - few have so persistently stuffed one up the butt of the brain-dead blood freak than Naschy, whose attraction to 'traditional' horror narrative frequently renders his pictures entirely static). A zombie ghost girl appears and disappears at random until she's stabbed and turned into the type of skeleton which may be purchased relatively cheaply in almost any novelty shop. Hours of drudgery blather away (watching Naschy's films resembles staring out of a window on a Sunday afternoon, observing the same half-dozen knuckleheads staggering aimlessly to and from the Kentucky Fried Chicken stall) before one of the Naschies gets all burned up and Vic Winner meets the sharp end of someone's chopper. Perhaps the finest moment occurs when Naschy's head falls off and bounces down some steps, producing the most incredible plastic clunking sound imaginable.

And therein perhaps lies the key to the Naschy *oeuvre*: imbecilic poverty-row effects, failed Gothic chills, fudged attempts at graphic bloodletting and an all-pervasive, superlative ham-fisted cretinacy. If you've ever boggled in awe at some hideous spaz dragging its club-foot or wheeling its one gigantic distended testicle down the street in a

supermarket trolley, then you're the kind of person who'll appreciate Naschy's cinematic world...

There is a vaguely nightmarish logic to **EL ESPANTO** (Naschy's canon, with its slow-motion sequences, bizarre images, misty locations and bleak, other-worldly emptiness is often redolent of the dreamscape, though my dreams are usually a jot more, um, interesting...), but while it does contain violence and nudity, there's nothing to rival immortal dialogue from **CRIMSON** like *"My brain is torturing me"* or this little exchange: *"Danger and the unknown are your daily bread."* *"That's why they call me The Sadist, and I'm beginning to enjoy it."* Realistically, a copy of the colour press-book would suffice here (this is true for many of Naschy's films, particularly **BLUE EYES OF THE BROKEN DOLL**, which might have been comprehensible once...) - but if you suffer the same symptoms as I, then the frustrating experience of wading through someone else's incoherent ravings about another godawful Naschy atrocity just isn't good enough. Maybe you'll feel the same about this one, but don't say I didn't warn you...

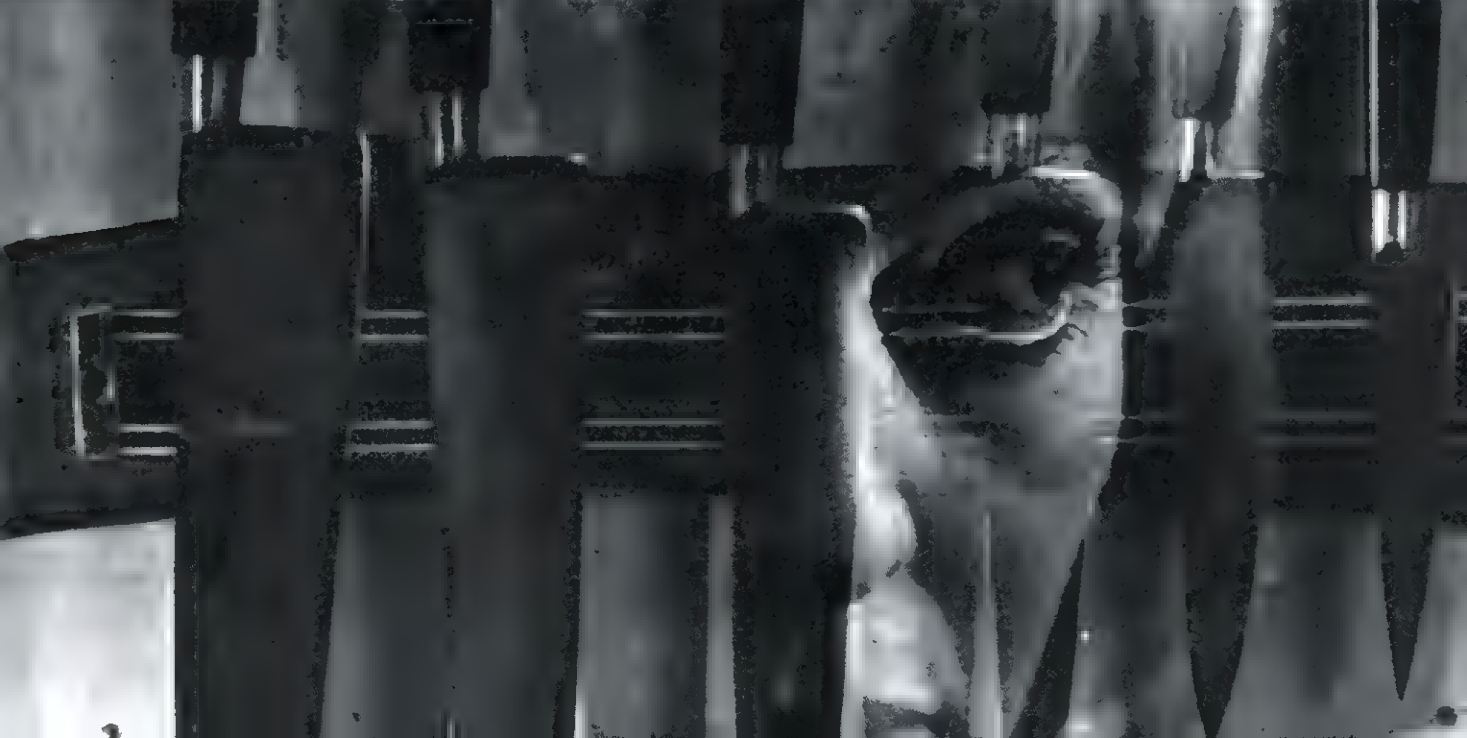
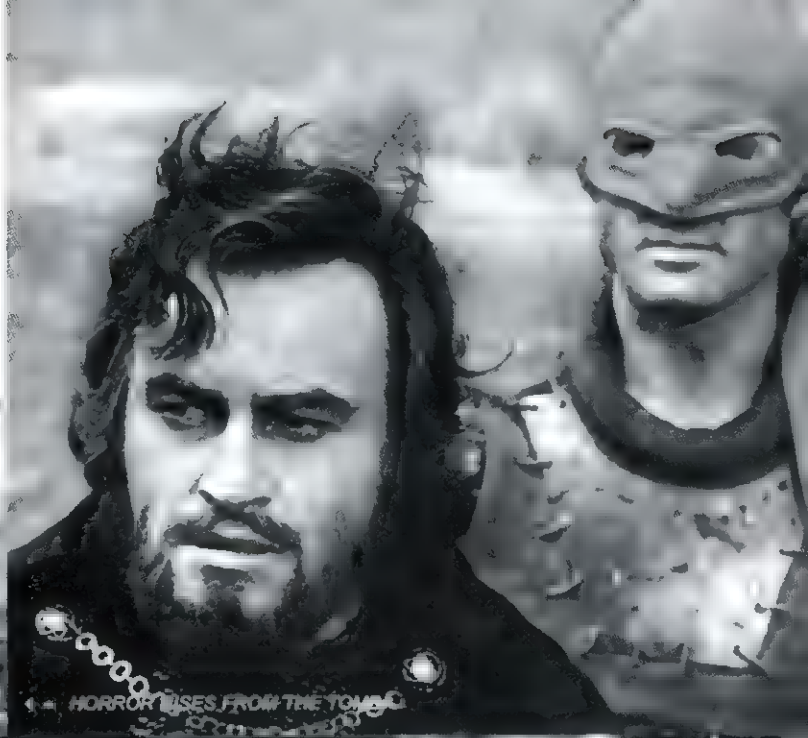
Stefan Jaworzyn

THE HOUSE WITH LAUGHING WINDOWS
aka **LA CASA DALLE FINESTRE CHE RIDONO**
Italy, 1976

director: **Pupi Avati**
screenplay: **Pupi Avati, Gianna Cavina, Maurizio Constanzo, Antonio Avati**
director of photography: **Pasquale Rachini**
editor: **Guiseppe Baghdighian**
music: **Amadeo Tommasi**
producers: **Gianni Minervini, Antonio Avati**

Cast: **Lino Capolicchio** (Stefano), **Francesca Marciano** (Francesca), **Gianni Cavina** (Coppola), **Giulio Pizzirani** (Antonio Mazza), **Vanna Busoni** (Laura Legnani), **Andrea Matteuzzi** (Poppi), **Bob Tonelli** (Solmi), **Pietro Brambilla** (Lidio), **Ferdinando Orlandi** (Marshall), **Ines Ciaschetti** (Teacher), **Eugene Walter** (Priest).

Although little known outside Italy, Pupi Avati is one of the most talented directors working in European cinema today. Over the past two decades he has applied his unique,



perversely sentimental vision to a wide range of film genres including musical fantasies like **DANCING PARADISE** and dramas like **LAST MINUTE**. Freely admitting to being both fascinated and terrified by the world of ghosts and spirits, Avati invests many of his films with a strong sense of the mysterious. In a work like **EVERYONE DECEASED EXCEPT THE DEAD**, he takes a farcical approach to the supernatural, using an ancient family curse as the background to a *Ten Little Indians* style black comedy. Even his more straightforward pictures, **JAZZ BAND** for example, are underscored by his love for magic and things beyond the confines of everyday existence. **THE HOUSE WITH LAUGHING WINDOWS**, however, shows Avati exploring areas far more sinister than those covered by the main body of his work.

As in practically all of Avati's films, the action takes place in his native Emilia Romagna, a region of Northern Italy: in this case the flat marshy land of the Po Valley around Ferrara. Buono Ligniani, the central character, has already been dead for twenty years when the story begins. Known as 'The Painter of Agonies', he was obsessed with finding a way of painting which accurately reproduced the moments of suffering before death. For Ligniani, a man was only 'pure' when dying, and through depicting death, he himself felt more alive. A young painter, Stefano (Capolicchio), travels to a small village to restore a fresco which Ligniani had painted on the wall of the local church. The fresco is a graphic depiction of St. Sebastian being tortured to death by two figures, and the village priest tells Stefano that he does not care whether it is restored or not because he hates it. Antonio, a friend of Stefano's who came to the village to recover from a nervous breakdown, reveals that he has discovered a strange story about the area, and promises to take him to 'the house with the windows that laugh'. That night, Antonio is killed in mysterious circumstances. When Stefano returns to his hotel, he receives a threatening phonecall from someone warning him not to touch the painting because "*he likes it the way it is...*" The hotel proprietor who was listening in on the call asks Stefano to leave. The village idiot takes him to the house of an old paralytic who invites him to stay, but the house also has another unseen occupant. As more pieces of the puzzle fit together, Stefano finally learns the horrible truth. The painter's two sisters would find dead bodies for him to paint, but when there were none available, they tortured and killed young men themselves

whilst their depraved brother reproduced their activities on canvas. They disposed of the bodies by burying them behind their then home - a small house with grotesque laughing mouths painted over the windows. Stefano discovers the sisters are still alive, one being his supposedly paralysed landlady. They have kept up their sadistic practises, offering their victims as sacrifices to Ligniani's corpse which is preserved in a vat of formaldehyde in the attic. Stefano escapes to the church, and finds to his horror that the village priest holds the final key to the bizarre mystery!

Despite taking time out to detail the developing romance between Stefano and the local schoolteacher (Marciano), Avati tells his story with exceptional skill and control, creating a stifling atmosphere of morbidity and horror. The details about Ligniani's incestuous relationship with his sisters, his violent suicide when he discovered he had syphilis, and the priest's tale of how the church was used by the Nazis as a storehouse for corpses all add to the oppressive feelings of degeneracy and madness. In one memorably chilling scene, the village idiot tells Stefano he has hidden a rat in Antonio's coffin "*to keep the corpse company!*" Avati's piece-de-resistance however, is the idiot's death at the hands of the two demented women. Stripped, and with his hands bound above him, he is repeatedly stabbed by the cackling sisters. Nearby stands the tank containing their brother's corpse, whilst an old tape recorder plays his feverish ramblings: "*...my colours enter his skin and infect the victim through his eyes...keep him still! Keep him still!*" Rachini's immaculately stylish, unfussy camera-work documents all this with an unsettling coolness which greatly increases the emotional impact of the horrors. Avati's use of lighting is also extremely impressive, with many scenes resembling Italian religious paintings. An excellent example of this is the sequence in which a character recalls Ligniani sketching his dying mother: a small boy enters a room filled with white light as white-clad women busily prepare sheets and towels. The painter sits obsessively drawing, in sharp relief against this bright background. In the latter portion of the film, several scenes take place in isolated pools of light, and the bright sunshine of the picture's opening is replaced by heavy overcast skies.

Like Fellini (also from Emilia Romagna), Avati is very much 'in touch' with the land, and the psychology of his characters is brilliantly observed. He is greatly assisted by uniformly excellent performances from his repertory cast

and his insistence on absolutely authentic language. The 'outsiders' speak standard Italian, while the rest of the cast speak with heavy Romagnan accents. One of the first clues to the identity of Ligniani's sisters comes when the paralysed woman sings an old Portuguese love song: the painter and his family had spent part of their early lives in Brazil. The film's dependence on these authenticities is probably the reason it has never seen an overseas release - it would be impossible to dub, and unfortunately, distributors do not seem to credit horror fans with the intelligence to accept subtitles. The movie is also blessed with one of the most eerily appropriate music scores ever, and has probably the best title sequence since Mario Bava's **BLOOD AND BLACK LACE**. At one point a character comments, "*Only a really great artist could have given such an expression to death.*" I couldn't have put it better myself.

Mark Ashworth

IMAGES

USA/Great Britain/Eire, 1972

writer/director: **Robert Altman**

excerpts from "In Search of Unicorns" by **Susannah York**

director of photography: **Vilmos Zsigmond**

editor: **Graeme Clifford**

music: **John Williams, Stomu Yamash'ta**

producer: **Tommy Thompson**

cast: **Susannah York** (Cathryn), **René Auberjonois** (Hugh), **Marcel Bozzuffi** (René), **Hugh Millais** (Marcel), **Cathryn Harrison** (Susannah), **John Morley** (The Old Man).

Robert Altman has achieved maverick sainthood in serious film circles, and his reputation as an independent spirit sailing the choppy waters of American studio finance is based on a clutch of highly respected films: **MCCABE AND MRS MILLER**, **NASHVILLE**, **THE LONG GOODBYE**, **M*A*S*H** and recently **THE PLAYER** and **SHORT CUTS**. It's also recognized that he's capable of directing wayward, or just plain awful, movies. **QUINTET**, **BEYOND THERAPY**, **POPEYE** and **PRÊT-À-PORTER** found few admirers, for all their maker's credentials. Yet I'm amazed to note that **IMAGES**, my favourite Altman title, is even today often misfiled in the latter category.

IMAGES is a work of astonishing pictorial grace and subtlety, a film that demonstrates its maker's breathtaking visual imagination. The tale of an unbalanced woman coming apart at the seams amidst beautiful country isolation, mired in a sardonic and failing marriage, this is Altman's most technically daring film, and his most chilling. Like Nicolas Roeg, he uses spectacular displays of camera sophistication to capture something about life at its most elusive. Cathryn (a career highlight performance from Susannah York) is a mess of introverted self-obsession, striving for a love she can't give herself, lost in a perceptual hall of mirrors. Her aspirations are represented by her creative outlet, the writing of children's fiction of a particularly labyrinthine, neurotically convoluted sort - *The Hobbit* meets *Alice through the Looking Glass*. In it, a heroic narrator/character strives for self-knowledge, a self-knowledge that is forever deferred by mystical agencies, stubbornly whimsical symbolism, and - truth be told - by Cathryn's fear of the 'self' in question. Turning to this world of elfin magic is her escape route from reality, a reality grown cold and haunted by spectres of failed love, lost love and unwanted sexual attention. But the painful realities of life invade her reveries, leading to confusion between imagined and real events - and on into murder.

Cathryn can't stand being alone but she can't trust those around her. There's some sort of sexual problem lurking behind her relations with men. She and her husband, Hugh (Altman regular René Auberjonois) drive out to their secluded country retreat to help calm Cathryn's nerves, but instead of relaxing she begins to 'bump into' old acquaintances - René (Marcel Bozzuffi), an old lover supposed dead in a plane crash, and Marcel, a brutal, philandering buddy of Hugh's - who may or may not really be there. The concept of the uncanny implied in the German term *unheimlich* - unhomelike - is a major factor in Altman's method for generating unease and in his representation of Cathryn's psychosis. He uses a variety of clever perceptual gags to upset our appreciation of domestic space, and sometimes has characters satirize each other at inappropriate, unhelpful moments. Glencove, the country home of Cathryn and Hugh, is a gorgeous rambling affair rather lacking in warmth (thanks to excellent art design and photography). Unlike the town house, with its multiple telephones nagging at the ear, Glencove is cut off from technological links. No phone, no TV or radio, just lots of silence to get lost in and fragments of conversations to

misconstrue. Hugh's sense of humour tends to the facile and the surreal in about equal measure. (Example: "*What's the difference between a rabbit? Neither; one is both of the same!*") Women often maintain that a sense of humour is one of the most important considerations in choosing a man, but I don't think Hugh's jokes are what they have in mind. He's in a world of his own as much as she is, albeit a rather less neurotic one. Exploring the upper floor of Glencove after Cathryn insists she's heard an intruder moving around above her, he returns having found nothing - but instead of merely announcing this, jangles his wife's nerves further by sticking a mounted deer's head round the corner of the stair landing. The effect is funny but unnerving, even to the viewer, who is gradually being drawn into looking at events through the jittery paranoid prism of Cathryn's perception. What makes Hugh interesting is the way he's given moments of concern for his wife, trying with apparent sincerity to both play along with her harmless fantasies and check her more paranoid ones. **IMAGES** isn't merely the story of an unloved, neglected wife - the alienation and emotional detachment is more subtle and insidious than that.

As the film begins, Cathryn is home alone whilst her husband is working late, setting the scene for a conventional saga of marital strain - sure enough, the content of Cathryn's first psychological trauma (rendered subjectively of course, which means we're immediately asked to defer judgement on the grounds of an appeal to sanity) is infidelity. The telephone rings (what a monster the telephone is in the movies!) and a 'mystery' female caller indolently muses over the whereabouts of Hugh. We're soon aware of a telling similarity in the two voices - the 'caller' repeats parrot-fashion Cathryn's angry "*What are you talking about?*" - the voice is her own. This projected self - unrecognized as such by Cathryn - is a parody of self-confident, sexually alluring womanhood. Compare this to Cathryn's terrified, gagging screams when, in the midst of her convoluted self-absorption, she is repulsed by the touch of her concerned husband's hands.

Altman's filming of this story brings a formidable perceptual ambiguity to events. He is, like Stanley Kubrick, a master of the zoom, able to achieve great things with this oft-derided tool. Constant shifts of focal length mean that we're never sure where our attention will be guided next, a supple, fluid way of creating visual analogues for Cathryn's micro-macro confusions. The unnervingly lop-sided

framing is also a major contribution to mood, whilst the photography shifts from luminous clarity to a vague, soft-hued texture for certain close-ups; a technique that creates abstraction from the initial representational elements. One brilliant scene depicting Cathryn making love to someone who may variously be Hugh, Marcel or René contrives to blur the boundaries of character, meld the human and the inanimate, and send the camera on fantastical wanderings through close-up landscapes of body parts and bedding. People talk about 'losing themselves in the act of love', but this distracted sideways lurch into a hyperspace between the living and non-living is unlikely to be anyone's cup of tantric tea. A special mention here for the John Williams score (composed before his marriage of minds with the sentimental Spielberg) which skillfully blends curdled romanticism with avant-garde percussion and disconcerting oriental twangs from Stomu Yamash'ta (a child prodigy who at the age of 14 contributed to the score of Kurosawa's **YOJIMBO**).

There is an ambiguous quality to the way Altman depicts Cathryn, who is at times satirized, at times indulged by the scenario; those who need to feel they can like a lead character may have difficulty with this film. But this dual approach to character is typical of Cathryn's condition. She is both the compelling, troubled and fractured focus of the film and an introverted, self-obsessed nut, able to show a steely, sardonic, intolerant side yet given to cutesy embroidering of reality via the pretentious musings of her fiction. As a writer she's precious, conceited, clutching at symbols of hidden significance and mystical mumbo-jumbo. When her writerly wanderings fail to take her away from the brute idiocy of the world - such as the intrusion of an irritating dog - she ends up running comically through the woods like one of her fantasy inventions menaced by a goblin; only here the menace is just an over-friendly spaniel. The comedy is soured later when its owner stands chatting to Cathryn on the doorstep of Glencove where she has just apparently murdered Marcel. The animal's sniffing and attempts to get into the house suggest it may have smelled the blood Marcel spurted onto the floor after Cathryn 'stabbed' him.

The book "*In Search of Unicorns*" was actually written by Susannah York herself as a book for children, just one of the many parallels between the film and the cast. Altman has René Auberjonois play Hugh, Marcel Bozzuffi play René, and Hugh Millais play Marcel. Spookiest of all,

Susannah, the little girl who befriends Susannah York's Cathryn, is played by the weirdly blasé Cathryn Harrison, a young actress whose off-handed, non-actorly composure is one of the creepiest elements of the film. *"When you were my age, did you look like me?"*, she asks, *"Because I think, when I grow up, I'm going to be exactly like you."* Altman plays with the similarities and cross-generational friendship between them in a way which recalls Ingmar Bergman's **PERSONA**. Cathryn looks alarmed when the strange little girl tells her what she'd do without a friend to play with: *"Tell myself stories, play in the woods... I'd make up a friend."* The first words echo Cathryn's answer from earlier, about her own childhood, but the final clause 'I'd make up a friend' is new (and shows perhaps a vital difference); this strange self-aware child is referring to the game of pretend that seems to have run amok and swamped the older woman's life.

IMAGES makes much play with words but never abandons the faculty suggested by its stark, minimal title. A variety of impressive visual tricks counterpoint the dialogue: Hugh's patient, methodical explanation of how he received a message without having a phone in the house is accompanied by an elaborate piece of visual theatre, as he ostentatiously removes, folds up and pockets a pair of hinged reading glasses in one smooth, uninterrupted motion. The camera rarely stops moving, panning, tracking and zooming (with a subtle, seductive ease) to capture odd details and physical juxtapositions. In keeping with the schizophrenic quality of Cathryn's perception, certain gestures and movements are invested with a tantalizing significance, whilst the presence of stills cameras, mirrors and other reflective surfaces constantly emphasises both the character's troubled self-image and the spectator's involvement in a dramatic fiction. In a way conventional film is afraid to do, **IMAGES** invites us both to become absorbed by a drama of private anguish and to examine the cinematic techniques being used to secure our involvement.

The photography of Vilmos Zsigmond turns the beautiful countryside of Ireland into a seething abstract array of shifting texture. Clouds send their shadows scudding over green hills, wind ruffles gorse and bracken in gorgeous long shot, a shale escarpment towers over a car traversing a country road like a landslide caught trying to sneak down on the vehicle in the corner of a paranoiac's eye. And there is one scene which achieves a sublime effect from the simplest of manoeuvres, that special perceptual hallmark of

a real movie trip - an impossible moment shown incontrovertibly as only film can. Cathryn is with Hugh in the hills above Glencove, the country house they are about to drive down to occupy for their holiday. Hugh goes off to take pot-shots at some quail, leaving Cathryn scanning the terrain, looking down at the house in the distance far below. A glint of sunlight on chrome draws her attention to a car pulling up in front of the house. Binoculars reveal to Cathryn that the car is hers and Hugh's own. As she watches, a woman gets out and turns to look up at the hillside. It's Cathryn, and she's waving to a figure up there on the hill, miles away, silhouetted on the crest in microscopic isolation. Smiling, she turns away from the lonely figure on the hill and walks inside the house. We never cut back to the first space-time location again. Reverberating in the mind with perceptual and structural tricks like this, Altman's optical labyrinth cum murder thriller repays the attention over repeated viewings.

The climax has Cathryn driving back from the nearest town only to encounter herself on the road, soaked by a raging storm, apparently trying to hitch a lift. Spooked, but filled with the urge to defeat her demons once and for all, she aims the car at her double and sends the figure flying over a rocky cliff. This encounter is chilling enough, but when Cathryn relaxes in the bathroom back home, only to be confronted by the ever-smirking doppelgänger she'd thought she'd slain, the film achieves a terrible sinking feeling, a lurch in the stomach as the import of that waving, rain-soaked figure dawns. Cathryn screams in despair, her hands squeal against the steam-wetted tiles, and Altman's camera reveals the awful truth.

This film feels like a meditation, on the part of its director, on the nature of the cinematic process and the way it can be made to interact with the acting process. **IMAGES** was made in 1972 when Altman was gaining acclaim for his handling of large ensemble casts, and this talent for bringing a fresco-like, almost pointillistic energy to his narratives was becoming a hallmark. Variety discussed his 1975 classic **NASHVILLE** thus: *"One of Altman's best films, free of the rambling insider fooling around that sometimes mars entire chunks of every second or third picture. When he navigates rigorously to defined goals, however, the results are superb."* **IMAGES** is often reviled because it fails to partake of the social satire and large cast of players associated with this director. And yet the film is as multi-layered as any of the more crowded stories, with the difference that this time the

layers aim to capture something of the subjective experience of a single disturbed character. Cathryn is in flight from the world, and it's impossible to say what is the more damaging: the harsh unmanageable reality she's fleeing or the isolation this leads her to. Certainly she merely hastens her mental collapse by seeking solitude, and proceeds to fill the emptiness with phantom visitors.

Altman's **IMAGES** is a phenomenological enquiry into cinema phrased as a study of psychosis (seeing people who aren't really there, hearing voices...) What social criticism there is stems from the designation of the lead character as female, making the otherwise totally involuted script bow outwards into engagement with an other. (Though there are some who see this as stereotyping - another milking of the cliché of the crazy, unstable woman). Oddly, Altman seems to be drawing our attention, through this story, to the isolated experience of film viewing itself, which - though we may blithely talk about the communal experience of film viewing - is pretty much a solitary, introspective affair. The conjured phantoms of Cathryn's mind are conjured in ours too, along with Cathryn herself, and this is par for the course with cinema. All the film-maker can do to change this lonely vigil before the screen is to draw our attention, carefully, to the process of viewing itself, thus encouraging a more honest relationship with the film-maker's work - and, in the cinema at least, a greater awareness of being silently accompanied by an audience, part of a process which involves others.

IMAGES shows us the labyrinth one must enter when attempting a 'first-person' narrative, and the consequences of trying to represent an individual's subjectivity. 'Navigating vigorously to defined goals', as *Variety* put it, sounds fine and manly, but how to steer a course when subjectivity is the subject, and the very condition of awareness is reverberated within the process? Perhaps the real reason the film was so reviled by some critics is the absence of any pat psychoanalytical angle on Cathryn's mental state. Instead perceptual questions to do with our relationship to the image predominate. Having devised a way of posing such questions within the framework of a psychological thriller, Altman has created a film deserving of consideration next to other great musings on the medium, from Michael Powell's **PEEPING TOM** to David Cronenberg's **VIDEODROME**.

Stephen Thrower

IN THE EYE OF THE HURRICANE
aka **LA VOLPE DALLE CODA DI VELLUTO** /
EL OJO DEL HURACAN / **LUSTY LOVERS**
Spain/Italy, 1971

director: **José Maria Forque**
screenplay: **Rafael Azcona, J.M. Forque, Mario De Nardo, Francesco Campitelli**
directors of photography: **Giovanni Bergamini, Alejandro Ulloa**
editor: **Mercedes Alonso**
music: **Piero Piccioni**

cast: **Jean Sorel** (Paul Cortell), **Analía Gadé** (Ruth Dupré), **Pilar Gómez Ferrer, Maurizio Bonuglia** (Roland), **Rossana Yanni** (Daniele), **Tony Kendall** [Luciano Stella] (Michel), **Julio Peña** (Pierre, the butler).

Coming on like a Ferrero Roché advert turned nasty, this spins a few extra loops on Umberto Lenzi's Carroll Baker vehicle **ORGASMO** (1968). Ruth Dupré is rich, beautiful, and out of love with her husband Michel. Telling him that she intends to go through with a divorce, she leaves for their country residence with her handsome new lover, Paul Cortell. Their romance is a dizzy 'Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous' whirl of sex, water-skiing and expensive presents. Paul buys her a swan and puts it in the bath as a surprise, wines and dines her at a nightclub booked just for the two of them, and overwhelms her with sexual attention. Ruth is so excited she runs around her 'House & Garden' paradise in slow motion, forgetting in her bliss that rich women are simply not allowed to be this happy in Italian thrillers. Who is the curious, cryptic Roland, a friend of Paul's whom he claims is "more like a brother"? Was the brake failure on her sports car really an accident? What about the defective tanks on her scuba-diving gear? Who is in danger from whom when Michel makes a visit to the mansion? As the romantic idyll turns into a nightmare, Ruth discovers a fiendish alliance against her, and although broken by grief, hatches a tragic but ingenious counter-attack. The plot is cunning enough to make further description a killjoy's indulgence. Suffice to say that romantic despair and bisexual intimidation contribute to a sleazy vortex of cruelty!

This is great *giallo* entertainment, well-paced with a clever series of twists and attractively shot on the Côte D'Azur by the team of Bergamini and Ulloa, who together

were responsible for excellent work on Lucio Fulci's first *giallo*, the melancholy **ONE ON TOP OF THE OTHER**. Sorel, who you may recall starred in the Fulci film too, is nonchalantly strapped to the waist much of the time and exudes an arrogant charm, whilst Analía Gadé ably manages the transition from bliss through wretchedness to frosty detachment. Some casually surreal moments and the occasional dash through hellishly wallpapered interiors also add to the fun. Fans of Brian De Palma's **CARRIE** may be intrigued by a sequence which strongly resembles and pre-dates the emotional prom night dance between Carrie and Tommy, complete with camera spinning in the opposite direction to the ecstatic dancers. Forqué, a Spaniard from Zaragoza whose long career in cinema started in the 1940s, died in 1995 and is still of a rather low profile in English-speaking territories, although a DVD release for this energetic thriller would be a fine corrective. The title refers to the character of Roland, a quiet observer of the heartless conspiracy whose *laissez-faire* attitude makes the film's ending as chilly as it is elegant.

Stephen Thrower

IN THE FOLDS OF THE FLESH
aka **NELLE PIEGLE DELLA CARNE**
Italy/Spain, 1970

director/producer: **Sergio Bergonzelli**
screenplay: **Fabio de Agostini, Bergonzelli, Mario Caiano**
director of photography: **Mario Pacheco**
editor: **Donatella Baglivo**
music: **Jesús Villa Rojo**

cast: **Anna Maria Pierangeli [Pier Angeli]** (Esther/Falesse Gardere), **Eleonora Rossi Drago** (Lucille), **Fernando Sancho** (Pascal Gorniot), **Alfredo Mayo** (police Inspector), **Maria Rosa Schlauza** (Elizabeth), **Victor Alcazar** (Michel Bordelin), **Emilio Gutierrez Caba** (Colin), **Giancarlo Sisti** (André), **Gaetano Imbró**, **Luciano Lorcás** **Catenacci** (Antoine).

I have a certain fondness for grade Z *gialli*, and **IN THE FOLDS OF THE FLESH** certainly covers all the exploitable items the genre has to offer. There are large dollops of nudity and gore, along with the usual howlers resulting

from the dubbing process. Actress Pier Angeli unfortunately went from starring in Hollywood projects to crap like this (and **OCTAMAN**), which no doubt precipitated her tragic suicide. The plot to this thriller could almost qualify it as the **BIG SLEEP** of *giallo* films. The damn thing refuses to make sense the first time through, forcing one to rewatch it so as to uncover each and every twist. If you have no patience for such films, this may be asking too much, but being the closet masochist I am, I gladly accepted the challenge.

The film opens with a great quote: "*And then a sudden violent shock that left a deep impression on the mind and damagen (sic) it permanently*", followed by a severed head bouncing onto the floor! We have witnessed a murder, yet we'll discover many different interpretations of this scene over the next ninety minutes. A plot synopsis for this film would be useless because it changes every ten minutes. On the surface it seems to be a simple tale of a woman killing off her cruel husband, however hardly anyone turns out to be who they say they are by the film's end. Lucille (Rossi Drago) kills her second husband André, an underworld figure, during the opening credits, yet by the finale this is no longer the case. Falesse, Lucille's daughter by André, turns out to be Elizabeth, her daughter by her first marriage (simple, right?), while Elizabeth, who has spent the bulk of the film in an insane asylum, is really Falesse. Andre makes a surprise appearance near the film's end, but he turns out to be a police inspector. Other characters who portrayed themselves as cousins or business associates of André turn out to have been undercover policemen. At the film's climax there's even an attempt, **PSYCHO**-like, to tie up all the loose ends when a psychiatrist proclaims both Falesse and Elizabeth cured. (Even though Elizabeth killed several men throughout the film's running time, the police inspector explains that this is one of the hazards of the job!)

Character actor Fernando Sancho snarls his way through one of his all-time great roles. He gets to rape a few women, beat up Lucille's wimpy son, Colin (who, by the film's end, discovers he has been involved in an incestuous affair with his sister) and reveal his great flabby bulk in a bath-tub scene. Bergonzelli never misses an opportunity to have his actresses undrape, either... Lucille plots to kill Sancho by poison gas and so reveals her childhood encampment at a Nazi death-ward. The entire flashback sequence is merely an excuse for Bergonzelli to fill the screen with even more nudity. It's no wonder he went on to carve a small niche in the sexploitation market! The score by Jesús Villa

Rojo is strident in the extreme, using piercing horns and strings to signal each and every plot twist, but no legitimate themes emerge. Make-up effects by De Rossi are fake, especially in the recreation of decapitated heads and other severed body parts. Flesh-eating vultures and ancient Etruscan tombs are all smokescreen subplots that have no validity in an already overcrowded story.

IN THE FOLDS OF THE FLESH came early in the giallo/thriller cycle and greatly benefits from its 'kitchen sink' approach to film plotting. It won't replace the films of Dario Argento (or even Giuliano Carnimeo!) on anyone's list of greats, but compared to the crap making the rounds these days you could do much worse.

Craig Ledbetter

Addendum: As Craig Ledbetter mentions, the actress Anna Maria Pier Angeli committed suicide through an overdose of barbiturates in her Beverly Hills home on September 10th 1971, not long after completing this film. Accounts suggest she was unhappy with her failing career (the highlight of which was a role opposite Paul Newman in **SOMEBODY UP THERE LIKES ME**). 1971 saw her in Bergonzelli's film and also Harry Essex's **OCTAMAN**. Twice married and in both cases divorced within five years, she was still reputedly 'holding a torch' for James Dean, having had a fling with the star while he was filming **EAST OF EDEN**. Other accounts say she suffered a dread of turning forty (she was 39 when she died).

ISLAND OF DEATH

aka **TA PEDHIA TOU DHIAVOLOU /DEVILS IN MYKONOS /PSYCHIC KILLER 2/A CRAVING FOR LUST/ISLAND OF PERVERSION.**

Greece, 1975

writer/director/producer: **Nico Mastorakis**

director of photography: **Nick Gardellis**

editor: **Bill Siropoulos**

music: **Nick Lavranos**, songs by **Lavranos/Mastorakis**

Cast: **Bob Belling** (Christopher), **Jane Ryall** (Celia), **Jessica Dublin**, **Gerarld Gonalons**, **Janice McConnel**, **Clay Huff**, **Mike Murtagh**, **Jeremy Rousseau**, **Nikos Tsachiridis** (Shepherd), **Nico Mastorakis** (photographer).

Unbelievable... Nico Mastorakis makes a good film! His attempt at a high-tech' thriller, **BLIND DATE**, was awful, but this is a completely different kettle of scum, alongside which fellow 'video nasties' pale into polite fluffy pinkness. But beware! The incidental music, whilst often highly charged, features two teeth-gratingly awful theme songs which border on the criminal. On the other hand, photography and pacing are very accomplished, and as for the violence...

Subtext? I doubt it, really. This film hasn't got a coherent thought in its head, conscious or otherwise. Whether or not it speaks eloquently for the tortured psyche of modern Greece I don't know. All I've learned about the Home of Western Civilisation recently is that psychiatric patients are left in rotting communal cells to eat their own shit whilst politicians run around having affairs with under-age strippers. Is **ISLAND OF DEATH** a cry of brutalised despair then, from an artist who's seen into the depths of his nation's soul, dragging what he found there into the spotlight arena of his cinematic vision? Not really. It's a piece of grotesquely hilarious trash which piles obscene sex and violence atop each other in a compulsive heap, like a trifle made from different shades of congealed vomit. Got a mental picture of that? Perhaps it can boast one genre innovation - instead of the more familiar 'nice couple arrive in an isolated community full of psychotic weirdos' storyline (coincidentally the plot which Narcisco Ibanez Serrador's **ISLAND OF DEATH** aka **WOULD YOU KILL A CHILD?** boils down to), Nico's amusing twist has a rural Greek island community terrorised by an ordinary-looking tourist couple who are really a pair of depraved lunatics.

Celia and Christopher (Belling and Ryall) are the two crazies who arrive on the sleepy island of Mykonos for a 'vacation'. Christopher screws Celia in a public phone booth whilst giving his mother a blow-by-blow account long distance. Later that night, frustrated by Celia's refusal to have sex again, he wanders out into the hotel gardens and fucks a goat! A little one, but surprisingly accomodating. When he's achieved nirvana, he kills the goat. In case it called the police, one presumes.

The following day, Celia invites a stray Frenchman to screw her near an isolated farm building. After she's had her way, Chrstopher brutally kicks the man in the testicles and crucifies him on the stone paving with big steel nails. "*He looks thirsty*", says Celia. "*Do you think he'll drink this?*", Chrstopher laughs as he tips a large bucket of whitewash down the unfor-

fortunate fellow's throat and over his face. "He likes it!", says Celia, smiling. Eventually the poor sod coughs up red and white, and expires. Also on the shit-list are Paul and Jonathan, a very flamboyant gay couple who swan around swathed in cheerful polyester curtains. The big one, who looks like Dave Gilmour from Pink Floyd, makes terrible 'Max Factor' jokes worthy of the 'Carry On' series. "Come on, I won't bite you... or maybe I will bite you!", he tells his willowy young friend. Hot stuff, these two. Christopher spits out a few lines about perversion, punishment and what-have-you, then chases Dave Gilmour around the moonlit alleys and back passages with a sword. He runs him through with it. Symbolic? Back at the gay couple's house, Celia taunts the willowy thing by running the barrel of a loaded gun up his naked body to his mouth. He parts his lips and starts licking at the gun-barrel, at which point Celia blows his brains out, all over the back wall. (Some boys just can't resist, can they?)

Next up is a hideous old whore resembling Chesty Morgan. Is she really trying to do a Mae West impression? She 'seduces' Christopher by wagging her tongue rapidly from side to side into a fish-eye lens. They undress and Christopher unexpectedly pisses over her breasts. She loves it. When she goes down on him, however, her teeth catch on his penis so he smashes her head on the floor until she passes out. Never short of a good idea, he drags her outside and decapitates her with the scoop-arm of a bulldozer. "The bulldozer did a nice job," his voice-over blandly states...

The demented couple's sadistic triumph is the murder of a lesbian waitress hopelessly addicted to heroin. "One fix and who needs men?", she says. Celia allows herself to be seduced, whilst Christopher spies on their tryst from outside the window. "The fireplace was her favourite seducing centre," he observes, "I was almost sure the proper way for a dirty lesbian to die was to burn." The soundtrack burbles "Can you call it love?" over the lesbian gropings and the young woman shoots up heroin, seemingly oblivious to an enormous bubble of air in the syringe. Christopher gets carried away again, despite having promised Celia there would be no more killings. He forces an entire bottle of spirits down the smacked-out lesbian, then shoots her up with an over-dose. As she expires, he blows an aerosol jet over a candle and uses it like a blowtorch, methodically scorching and melting her face until it's reduced to a messy blob of burnt flesh.

The couple's run of good fortune was bound to end sometime, and after this little performance they are chased into the desolate heart of the island. They hide out in a hovel



at the invitation of a retarded shepherd, Christopher enthusiastically to Celia that the man is a perfect example of righteous, God-fearing humanity. Possibly offended, the good shepherd rapes them both! Celia enjoys it, but Christopher is less thrilled. Thrown into an outdoor lime-pit, his anal cherry righteously broken, our moral crusader suffers the ultimate indignity when, in a parting gesture, the shepherd raises one long-johned leg and farts at him...

Christopher is unable to pull himself out of the lime-pit and cries for Celia to help. She sits on the surrounding wall and smiles sweetly, telling him she'll be staying with the freakish shepherd. There's just time for one further twist to deliver a punch-line to this cavalcade of perversion before rain starts to fall, activating the lime which burns and corrodes Christopher alive. His death throes are intercut with Celia having wild sex with her new lover.

There's not a lot you can say after a story like that, is there? I'll leave you to ponder the cosmic significance of **ISLAND OF DEATH** with a few lines paraphrased from the main theme song, lyrics courtesy of the multi-faceted talent of Nico Mastorakis.

*Mother, I see the wonders of the day,
Millions of people left like clay,
Millions of whispers saying -
'I'm dying.'
Get the sword! Kill them all!
Truth was born in a thousand meanings,
Jesus said 'Look - I'm flying!'*

Stephen Thrower

KILL, BABY... KILL!

aka **OPERAZIONE PAURA / CURSE OF THE DEAD / CURSE OF THE LIVING DEAD**
Italy 1966

director: **Mario Bava**

screenplay: **Romano Miglierini, Robert Natale, Mario Bava**

director of photography: **Antonio Rinaldi**

editor: **Romana Fortini**

music: **Carlo Rustichelli**

producers: **Nando Pisani, Luciano Catenacci**

cast: **Erika Blanc** (Monica Schufftan), **Giacomo Rossi-Stuart** (Doctor Paul Eswai), **Fabienne Dali** (Ruth, the sorceress), **Piero Lulli** (Inspector Krüger), **Max Lawrence [Luciano Catenacci]** (Karl, the Burgomeister), **Giuseppe Addobbati** (Hans, the landlord), **Franca Domonici** (Martha, the landlady), **Micaela Esdra** (Nadine, Hans and Martha's daughter), **Valerio Valeri** (Melissa Graps), **Giana Vivaldi [Giovanna Galletti]** (Baroness Graps).

A terrified young woman leaps from the top of a tower, impaling herself on the spikes below. Arriving to perform an autopsy on the body at the behest of Inspector Krueger (Lulli), Doctor Esai (Rossi-Stuart) is shown a letter in which the dead girl had written, "*Now I must speak and break away from the ring of murder about me. Please come at once, I think the next one to die will be me.*" The distrustful and superstitious villagers seem paralysed with fear by the death and try to prevent the autopsy. Aided by an assistant, Monica (Blanc), who had recently returned to the village to visit her parents' graves, the doctor finds a gold coin embedded in the dead girl's heart, later revealed to be the work of Ruth, a local sorceress (Dali). Subsequent inexplicable and grisly deaths lead the doctor to investigate the Villa Graps where it transpires that the baroness (Vivaldi), acting through the ghost of her daughter Melissa (Valeri), has used her powers as a medium to inflict revenge on the villagers whom she holds responsible for her daughter's death twenty years earlier. Unable to control the supernatural elements she had unleashed, the baroness had entombed herself inside the desolate villa, terrified of retribution from the 'remorseless ghosts' of the dead villagers. Monica, who turns out to be the baroness's younger daughter, finds herself drawn towards the villa,

where she is saved from death at the hands of her sister Melissa by Doctor Esai. In the finale, Ruth appears to avenge the death of her lover Karl (Lawrence), the village burgomeister. In the ensuing fight Ruth kills the baroness, breaking the chain of death, but is fatally wounded. The doctor and Monica walk into the sunset to the strains of what sounds uncannily like 'Stairway to Heaven'.

Alongside the morbidly lyrical **LISA AND THE DEVIL, KILL, BABY, KILL!** is perhaps Bava's most stunningly realised film, playing like a hauntingly beautiful poem. At times the village resembles a vast underground labyrinth where the camera swoops in and out of arches, along narrow, high-walled corridors and through beautifully lit subterranean passages. As if moving through layers of a surrealist painting we glide through windows, over collections of incongruous objects; candelabras, stuffed birds, crazily angled frames, then upwards, following the contours of a spiral staircase like the delicate, internal structure of an intricate shell, through rooms where distorting mirrors recall the surreal magic of Cocteau's **ORPHÉE**. All the while Carlo Rustichelli's strange, dissonant music adds to the general feeling of disquiet.

Bava's use of low, off-centre camera angles combined with claustrophobic, back-lit interiors bestows a magical quality to the *mise-en-scène*, transforming innocuous flights of steps into yawning gateways to a void. At other times, his judicious use of zoom lens entices the viewer to topple into the dizzying vortex of a spiralling staircase. In one memorable sequence early in the film, Bava's hallucinatory camera tracks across a fog-shrouded cemetery, weaving its way between strangely sculptured monuments. Suddenly, an empty swing enters the frame, accompanied by eerie creaking noises and a child's demented laughter. It swings out of frame, to return once more, this time with a young girl on board, her dress fanning out behind her like the outspread tail feathers of a swan.

One sequence in particular serves to illustrate the powerful, often dislocating effect of Bava's *mise-en-scène*. While at Villa Graps, the doctor runs through a doorway in pursuit of a fleeing figure, only to find himself in the same drape-festooned room from which he had just emerged. This sequence repeats itself a number of times, except with each loop the doctor gains a little on the figure. In a scene reminiscent of the final episode of *The Prisoner* television series, the doctor grabs the interloper, who turns towards him, and is confronted with his own face. In a swoon, the

doctor backs into a wall upon which hangs an enormous, cobweb bedecked picture of the villa. On regaining consciousness he finds himself entangled in a giant spider's web. However, as the camera zooms slowly out, we discover he is now outside, with the villa looming behind him.

If the exuberance of Bava's violent, baroque masterpiece **BLOOD AND BLACK LACE** had a major influence on Dario Argento's subsequent *giallo* efforts of the '70s and early '80s (**DEEP RED**, **TENEBRAE**), then **KILL, BABY, KILL!** must surely have exerted a similar influence on his supernatural horror films of the same period, in particular the extraordinary **INFERNO**. Indeed, Argento was to call upon Bava's expertise in creating atmospherically charged, awe-inducing, labyrinthine sets in the realisation of that film's stunning underwater scene.

Watching **KILL, BABY, KILL!** is a genuinely magical experience. In contrast to the frenzied shock tactics of Bava's later **A BAY OF BLOOD**, for example, its power lies in its ability to instil a sense of awe in the viewer, evocative of the works of Ramsey Campbell or Thomas Ligotti. It stands out as a brilliant, defining moment in the history of the gothic extravaganza. Trip indicative.

Grant Pettitt

THE KINGDOM

aka **RIGET**

Denmark/Sweden, 1994

directors: **Lars von Trier & Morten Arnfred**

screenplay: **Tomas Gislason, Lars von Trier, Niels Vørsel**

director of photography: **Eric Kress**

editors: **Molly Marlene Stensgård, Jacob Thuesen**

music: **Joachim Holbek**

producers: **Ole Reim, Sven Abrahamsen, Philippe Bober, Peter Aalbæk Jensen, Ib Tardini**

Cast: **Ernst-Hugo Järegård** (Helmer), **Kirsten Rolffes** (Sigrid Drusse), **Ghita Norby** (Rigmor), **Søren Pilmark** (Krogshøj), **Otto Brandenburg** (Hansen), **Jens Okking** (Bulder), **Holger Juul Hansen** (Moesgaard), **Laura Christensen** (Mona), **Birgitte Raabjerg** (Judith), **Baard Owe** (Bondo), **Peter Mygind** (Mogge), **Louise Fribo** (Sanne), **Udo Kier** (Aage Krüger).

In Copenhagen stands the Kingdom, a giant hospital built over a marsh where cloth was once bleached. The hulk of the building towers over the flat city, but damp seeps through the chalk foundations. "*No one living knows it yet, but the gateway to the Kingdom is opening once more ...*"

Danish Director and former skinhead Lars von Trier made his reputation with a self-styled trilogy: **THE ELEMENT OF CRIME**, **EPIDEMIC** and **EUROPA**. These combine visual experiments (tricked up monochromatics), science fiction of the Burroughs-filtered-through-Ballard strain, meta-fictional self-dissection, and musings on the past, present and future of the frayed edges of the continent. In the past, von Trier also had an embarrassing tendency to issuing manifestos with his films, but he seems to be settling down now, no longer needing to hide behind mock-yob statements of intent.

Like every fringe auteur from Guy Maddin through Jeunet et Caro to the Brothers Quay, von Trier is too casually tagged as 'ecole de David Lynch', but this latest career move-cum-project invites inescapable comparison with Lynch's venture into the wastelands of American TV with *Twin Peaks*. Like that show-turned-phenomenon, **THE KINGDOM** is subversive but cannily niche-marketed, wonderful but infuriating, and patchy but provocative. **THE KINGDOM**, which has an English-language title song and title card but is otherwise in Danish (with snippets of Swedish), tackles the tradition of hospital soap, from *Emergency Ward Ten* and *Dr Kildare* through *St Elsewhere* and *Casualty* to *Chicago Hope* and *E.R.*, just as *Twin Peaks* infected and mutated the *Peyton Place* small-town soap.

Originally made for Danish TV as a four-part mini-series (individual episode titles are 'The Unheavenly Host', 'Thy Kingdom Come', 'A Foreign Body' and 'The Living Dead'), it has been sewn together into two parts (133 minutes, 146 minutes) for theatrical showings but will probably play BBC2 in its original form. It ends tantalisingly with a 'To Be Continued' caption, but it remains to be seen, as with *Twin Peaks*, whether it is possible to sustain a pitch like this through several seasons. That the lack of closure, which is inevitably disappointing, will upset many is a testimony to the strength of the show: like any good soap, it is so compulsive that you want it to play out, to give up its secrets.

Episodes open with a brief prologue in von Trier style: a slow pan across bleaching marshes as dripping slow motion figures wring cloth in tinted monochrome, dipping

below the waterline into the soggy foundations of the hospital where hands emerge from the wet earth. A narrator relates the history of the Kingdom, hinting at an irrationality which is on the point of swamping those who have neglected the spiritual to rely on medical science. The credit sequence perfectly imitates *NYPD Blue* or *Homicide: Life on the Streets*, flashing clips too quickly for information to be absorbed as the regular cast are shown, with a pounding rock theme that counterpoints 'King-dom, King-dom' with 'oh death where is thy sting?'

As in any Steven Bochco show, we are introduced swiftly to a great many characters and situations. Top billed is Dr Stig Helmer (Jaregard), an arrogant Swedish neurosurgeon in exile after plagiarising his students' research, in trouble in the Kingdom because his botched brain op' has left little Mona (Christensen) a babbling imbecile. Helmer, who has to go up to the roof periodically to abuse all things Danish including Hans Christian Anderson, is involved with middle aged, voodoo-obsessed anaesthetist Rigmor (Norby), who has concealed evidence about the operation and wants Helmer to take her to Haiti.

Helmer's Danish nemeses are spiritualist malingerer Mrs Sigrid Drusse (Rolfes), pompous administrator Moesgaard (Hansen) and Bulko-esque fixer Hook (Pilmark). The Miss Marple-like Mrs Drusse repeatedly fakes illness so she can get into the Kingdom to investigate the haunting of the hospital by Mary, a little girl murdered in 1919. She is wheeled around by her embarrassed but good-hearted porter son Bulder (Okking), who helps her out with exorcisms. The blithely cheerful Moesgaard's 'Operation Morning Air' program of staff sing-songs and being nice to patients infuriates Helmer. His son, intern Mogge (Mygind), is worried because a severed head he has given as a love gift to a doctor with whom he is smitten has gone missing. Hook, who keeps a record of medical accidents to blackmail, has just fallen in love with Judith (Raabjerg), a doctor unnaturally pregnant by a departed boyfriend Agge, recognisable in a photo-strip as Udo Kier. As revealed in a ghostly flashback, Agge was also the doctor who murdered Mary, his bastard daughter, back in 1919. When Judith occasionally becomes transparent, Hook suspects she is pregnant with a ghost; meanwhile, the foetus is growing at an alarming **IT'S ALIVE** rate.

The hospital's senior staff all belong to the Lodge, a freemasonry of self-interest into which Helmer is inducted. The Lodge tries to find ethical if unusual

solutions to the troubles of the doctors. Bondo (Owe), the pathologist, has an especially serious worry: he desperately needs the tumorous liver of a terminal patient to conclude his vital research but the relatives have refused an autopsy; when the dying man turns out to be a signed-up organ donor, Bondo realises the only way to get the diseased liver is to have it transplanted into his own body. This risky process leads the sub-plot to a messy, amusing and strangely uplifting crunch as Bondo becomes delighted with his new, useless liver, envisioning the use he will be to science.

Mrs Drusse roams around with a pendulum, constantly running into the apoplectic Helmer, interrogating terminals, holding séances and asking soon-to-die patients to help her out from the other side, uncovering the tragedy of little Mary and preparing for an exorcism. Helmer is driven to the conviction that he can escape being struck off by going to Haiti with a black porter as a guide and casting a spell that will turn Moesgaard into a zombie. And a pair of Down's Syndrome functionaries employed as dish-washers know everything that is going on and comment sagely from the kitchen, never interacting with the folks whose lives they follow. It comes to a head as a delighted Moesgaard shows a sniffy Minister around the Kingdom to demonstrate the success of Operation Morning Air, only for the official visitors to find depravity or unethical activity behind every door they open. As Judith's full-size adult foetus is resisting an abortion, the minister is brushed by a busload of fresh ghosts and the severed head finally turns up under his feet.

Throughout, von Trier (with co-director Arnfred and long-time collaborator Vorse in the Mark Frost role) seamlessly blends the distinctive look of his films (rust coloured filters, lots of water, muted or sepia-toned colour, suppurating unpleasantnesses) with a post-*Hill Street Blues* mock-documentary aesthetic of irony-laden '90s soap: jittery hand-held camera, deliberately rough edits, alternating vignettes of satire and sickness, cross-cut sub-plots, catch-phrases (will 'Danish scum' be popular?), likably obsessive characters, left-field plot developments, stories that can never be resolved. Moments of extremity go beyond US Networks Standards & Practices: a severed head (a continuing character) pops up in unlikely places, dream sequence cannibal ghosts chow down Umberto Lenzi-style on the dreamer's arm, and a truly nasty birth-of-a-monster close-up punchline. But this nastiness is used

sparingly and well, as the show goes for an uneasy tone, rather than the constant cheap gross-out. The effect is closer in feel (and even look) to the Larry Cohen of **GOD TOLD ME TO** or **THE AMBULANCE** than Lynch, though some of the Masonic business and the spiritual impedimenta would not have been out of place in *Twin Peaks*.

Von Trier has always been good with actors (**THE ELEMENT OF CRIME** has fine work from Michael Elphick, Esmond Knight and Me Me Lai), and his cast here are letter-perfect, allowing for a subtle parody of soap that can still play as involving drama. Care is taken with even the smallest roles, like the squeamish intern (Fribo) who can't watch operations and tries to desensitise herself with chainsaw videos. The director's former hesitance with narrative has vanished as over four hours of sinuously intertwined storylines are juggled with confidence. A single mis-step has Helmer, apparently the lead, take a trip to Haiti in the last episode (the only major sequence outside the hospital, let alone the country) and be side-lined in the climax, leaving his plot up in the air.

Spare, but escalating, supernatural manifestations are genuinely eerie, sometimes magical: Mary's waxen ghost in the liftshaft; a little quake as water eats away at the foundations (Helmer thinks Denmark was 'shat out of water and chalk'); a discarnate spirit communicating with Mrs Drusse through flickering tube-lights; a bloody hand waving in intense light inside a driverless ambulance. In a superbly-staged sequence, Helmer breaks into the hospital archive to destroy medical records which will incriminate him. When a movement-sensitive alarm is activated, he has to stand still, holding a paper cup full of boiling coffee, only to be brushed by the apparition of Mary and her protective but angry-looking dog. Note also tiny details like the model graveyards in which Hook plants miniature crosses to commemorate each medical mishap.

Maybe it pushes the 'cult' button too hard, but **THE KINGDOM** is to be admired for a commitment to the strange and challenging that never wavers even as the show bids for a mass audience (in Denmark and Sweden, at least) by seeming like regular TV programing. Just as *Twin Peaks* was watched by people who would never have paid to see **ERASERHEAD** and **BLUE VELVET**, this will reach an audience who would never have stirred themselves to catch von Trier's earlier works. Somehow, the juxtaposition of extreme horror and satire with the conventions of bedpan soaps makes **THE KINGDOM** more disorienting than von

Trier's theatrical films, which are sometimes simply and affectlessly weird. Certainly, this is going to stand as a high-water mark for bizarre TV until the end of the century.

Kim Newman

KNIFE OF ICE

aka **IL COLTELLO DI GHIACCIO / DETRÁS DEL SILENCIO / SILENT HORROR**
Italy/Spain, 1972

director: **Umberto Lenzi**

screenplay: **Umberto Lenzi, Antonio Troisio**

director of photography: **José F. Aguayo**

editor: **Enzo Alabiso**

music: **Marcello Giombini**

cast: **Carroll Baker** (Martha Cauldwell), **Alan Scott [Sergio Ciani]** (), **Evelyn Stuart [Ida Galli]** (Jenny Ascot), **Sylvia Monelli** (Annie, the housekeeper), **Jorge Rigaud** (Uncle Ralph), **Eduardo Fajardo** (Marcos, the chauffeur), **Franco Fantasia** (Doctor Lauren), **Ida [Dada] Gallotti**, **Lorenzo Robledo**, **Carla Mancini**.

Umberto Lenzi's obsession with Carroll Baker continues in this, his fourth starring vehicle for her talents. She plays Martha Cauldwell, a woman struck dumb at the age of twelve after witnessing her parents' deaths in a railway accident. Years later, having apparently neglected to learn sign language, she communicates with tapping noises and a few esoteric mimes. Nonetheless, her doting foster family seem to understand her perfectly and welcome Martha back to the fold.

With the scene set, Lenzi's typical *giallo* fog descends (quite literally too as the locations are repeatedly swathed in mist) and a string of inexplicable murders occur. Dodgy looking characters turn up everywhere: a taciturn chauffeur, a rather over-charming doctor, a creepy child and a shifty patriarch all jostle for the mantle of prime suspect. Just as the plot seems to be wilting, Lenzi stirs in a drug-crazed Satanist flapping about the cobbled streets in a black cape, and a hint of a possible coven-spiracy - after all, the script reasons, Martha's foster family did choose a house by a cemetery. A little tenuous? Discussing the likelihood of the Satanist being the killer, a policeman says "All I know is that his name is Rudy

Mason, he's English, and he worships the Devil". "That should be enough", someone snaps. So watch your step if you're a Goth named Rudy next time you go to Italy...

The film kicks off with a great scene at the station showing Martha overcoming her morbid fear of trains, and from there takes in a variety of oddball diversions. Baker is weird but watchable as the twitchy mute, and if the repetitious use of menacing eye-shots and Martha's useless hand signals get on your nerves, there's always Marcello Giombini's garishly strident score to compensate, with its cracked blend of electronics and string orchestration.

Like Lenzi's earlier Baker-showcase **PARANOIA, KNIFE OF ICE** feels older than it really is, more redolent of the forties and fifties than the sleazy seventies. This is underlined by the plot's pastiche of Robert Siodmak's 1945 thriller **THE SPIRAL STAIRCASE**. However, the lunatic revelation of the killer's identity bears more similarity to Lenzi's absurd but lovable **EYEBALL**, for once again the killer's motives are hilariously petty and unbelievable. How you respond to this fact will pretty much define your response to the *giallo* in general!

Stephen Thrower

LAURIN

aka **LAURIN: A JOURNEY INTO DEATH**

West Germany/Hungary, 1988

director: **Robert Sigi**

screenplay: **Robert Sigi, Ádám Rozgonyi**

director of photography: **Nyika Jancsó**

editor: **Teri Losonci**

music: **Jacques Zwart, Hans Jansen**

producers: **Bernhardt Stampfer, Andreas Bareiß**

cast: **Dóra Szinetár** (Laurin), **Brigitte Karner** (Flora, Laurin's mother), **Károly Eperjes** (Mr Van Rees), **Hédi Temessy** (Olga, Laurin's grandmother), **Barnabás Tóth** (Stefan), **Katalin Sir** (Frau Berghaus), **Zoltán Gera** (Herr Engels), **Endre Kátay** (Pastor), **János Derzsi** (Arne, Laurin's father), **Ildikó Hátori** (Frau Johanssen).

Set in a small, turn of the century German port, the plot of this little-known German-Hungarian co-production revolves around a series of child murders and the loss of

innocence suffered by the titular heroine, a young girl (Dora Szinetar), as she slowly unravels a tangle of clues to discover the killer's identity. The film opens with Laurin's father Arne (Janos Derzsi), a sailor, setting off for his ship, accompanied by his wife Flora (Brigitte Karner). Dusk falls, and on the way back home Flora encounters a sinister man who has chased after, caught and killed a gypsy boy - the night echoes with her scream... While this is happening, little Laurin has an apparent nightmare in which a terrified boy beats on her windowpane before being bundled into a sack by a man in black. In the morning Flora is found beneath the bridge, drowned, the victim of a tragic accident it seems.

After the funeral, Arne returns to the sea, ignoring the pleas of both Laurin and his mother Olga (Hedi Temessy), a dotty old dear with a liking for pipe-smoking, dubious-looking tobacco and the bottle. A new teacher joins the village school, Mr Van Rees (Karoly Eperjes), son of the local priest and back from his military service. Laurin is smitten, developing a crush on him. One of Laurin's friends, a quiet, shy, bespectacled lad called Stefan (Barnabas Toth) is the victim of classroom bullies and his mother begs Van Rees to keep an eye out for him; this he indeed does, but takes to spying on the boy as he baths himself, and creeping around his house at night. Stefan has already confided to Laurin that although he likes Van Rees "sometimes he looks at me real funny". When Stefan disappears suddenly, Laurin puts all the pieces of this macabre puzzle together, and begins to have dark suspicions with regard to her over-intense teacher. Setting off for the ruined castle that seems to be the centre of the mystery, the child comes face to face with both the truth and the killer, and the scene is set for a dramatic and violent climax...

LAURIN is an effective gothic chiller, resonating with images of unease and sexual malaise, ripe with atmosphere and understated menace. Director Robert Sigi makes good use of the dark, brooding beauty of the woods and hills in which this Grimm little tale is set. The ruined castle beneath which the killer secretes his young victims squats like a hungry spider above the river-side village, and the use of large, flapping black kites and a prowling wolf-like dog to signal the killer's proximity is very effective. Shot with the cast speaking phonetic English, the occasionally 'flat' post-dubbed dialogue serves to distance the film from reality, rendering the action occasionally stilted and curiously dreamlike. But if **LAURIN** is a dreamlike film, then it is a very dark dream indeed. At times it's as if Sigi has relocated

the urban sleaziness of Fritz Lang's child-killer classic **M** to a rural setting; the imagery plays on the themes of paedophilia and even necrophilia, particularly during the skin-crawling sequence set in the castle vaults, where Laurin discovers Stefan's corpse lying in a bed, his bloodstained clothes neatly folded next to him as if he is merely sleeping. Laurin's predictive dreams/nightmares are full of disconcerting images; a tear trickling down the cold cheek of her dead mother as the corpse unclasps its fingers before the child's eyes, Stefan crying out for help at her bedroom window, a room full of flickering, funereal candles, the black wolf-dog 'familiar' carrying Stefan's spectacles in its mouth, a blood-spattered doll... But there are some lighter moments to cherish amidst the encroaching darkness of the labyrinthine plot; Laurin's attempt to bury her dead kitten in the graveyard is touching, as she wheels the stiff little carcass in her pram (though even this sequence ends darkly, with Laurin being sent packing by the Priest, after the child unearths a dirt-caked human skull from the damp soil).

LAURIN is not really a horror story, having more in common with the surreal Czech art film **VALERIE AND HER WEEK OF WONDERS**, as both films end with their respective little girls shucking off their childhood innocence, their voyages to puberty marked by trial and tribulation. Though Sigl is obviously more interested in subtle, creeping unease than balls-to-the-wall horror, **LAURIN** does end with a satisfying burst of graphic violence; Van Rees, having pursued the terrified child home through the woods, is startled by the ghostly sight of Laurin dressed in her late mother's cloak and stumbles backwards through the attic stairwell, impaling his head on a long metal spike. Blood gouts from his eyes as he jerks like a ghastly puppet, expiring before the impassive gaze of his young Nemesis.

Sigl was able to coax surprisingly strong performances from his cast of unknowns, with Szinetár particularly good as Laurin, alternating between childish innocence and glowering knowledge, and Eperjes turns in a driven, demonic tour-de-force as the tortured Van Rees; his wolf like howl as he pursues Laurin from his charnel lair chills the spine... The rest of the cast are no slouches either, and despite being a low budget project the production values are uniformly high. There is fine attention to period detail, some impressive location photography by Nyika Janszó (look out for the witty homage to **THE EXORCIST**!) and an effective minimalist synthesized soundtrack to counterpoint the moody visuals. **LAURIN** is probably best appreciated late at

night, with the wind howling outside and icy rain beating against the panes...

Nigel Burrell

Addendum: Robert Sigl graduated from Munich Film School in 1987 and moved to Hungary where he made his debut feature, **LAURIN**, shot with Hungarian actors in English. It won the "Best Newcomer" award at the Bavarian Film Festival. Moving on to Poland, he then shot a miniseries, *Stella Stellaris* (1994), described as 'a fairy-tale-like fantasy/comedy/adventure'. After seeing **LAURIN** and *Stella Stellaris*, Canadian producer Paul Donovan and American cable network Showtime commissioned Sigl to make a pilot episode for the sci-fi mini-series *Lexx: The Dark Zone* (1997). He also directed a later episode, *K-Town*. His well-received German TV-movie, a horror thriller in the style of Wes Craven's **SCREAM** called **SCHREI - DENN ICH WERDE DICH TÖTEN!** (1999), was subsequently released on American DVD as **SCHOOL'S OUT** by Fangoria/MTI.

LYCANTROPUS: THE MOONLIGHT MURDERS
aka **LICANTROPO: EL ASESINO DE LA LUNA LLENA**
Spain, 1996

director: **Francisco Rodríguez Gordillo**
screenplay: **Jacinto Molina**
director of photography: **Manuel Mateos**
editor: **Diego García**
music: **José Ignacio Cuenca, Tonky de la Peña**
producers: **José Luis Tristan, Primitivo Rodríguez**

cast: **Paul Naschy [Jacinto Molina]** (Waldemar Daninsky), **Amparo Muñoz** (Mina Westenra), **Antonio Pica** (Comisario Lacombe), **José María Cafarel** (Doctor Westenra), **Eva Isanta** (Kinga), **Luis Maluenda** (Rev. Jonathan Leroux), **Jesús Calle** (Inspector Damage), **Jorge R. Lucas** (Laurent Leroux), **Javier Loyola** (Rigary), **Ester Ponce** (Czinka).

Do you suppose it's our fault? If it weren't for numberless fanzine articles and commercially successful video reissues of initially overlooked movies, could 1970s exploitation heroes get financing for the likes of **LES DEUX ORPHELINES VAMPIRES** or **KILLER BARBYS**? Following those strange, sad ordeals from Jean Rollin and

Jess Franco, here's an MOR comeback for Spain's most committed, consistent and doggily endearing horror icon, Paul Naschy. And very dull it is too.

Setting the counter back to zero again, **LICANTROPO** opens in 'Central Europe, 1944' and gives yet another all-new origin for Naschy's signature character, werewolf Waldemar Daninsky. This time, it's down to an ill-fated affair between gypsy princess Czinka (Ester Ponce) and Nazi officer Conrad Wolfstein (Bill Holden!). According to legend, this union will produce triplets and "you know what will happen to the third one." We cut to 'Visaria, 1996', where best-selling horror writer Waldemar Daninsky (Naschy) is taking his problems to psychiatrist Mina Westenra (Amparo Muñoz). "I have nightmares all the time", he whines, "and I confuse my dreams with reality." We gather from the chat that, though Waldemar is happily married with children, he has taken a shine to Mina.

Naturally, the town (located in an unnamed, hard-to-identify country) is plagued by horrible murders. Mina's father (José Maria Cafarel), the pathologist on the case, diagnoses "it's horrendous, the jugular has been slashed, the intestines ripped out, limbs torn. It's as if she's been through a blender." Incredible as it might seem, the film acts as if audiences were unaware that a) the gypsy triplet has grown up to be Waldemar and b) Waldemar is a werewolf. Early on, it is established that this is one of those Argento double-killer plots: Dr Westenra notices that though most victims have died on a night of the full moon and are partially eaten, a few have been ripped up with 'a weeding hoe' (cf: **THE SCARLET CLAW**, 1944).

As Waldemar wanders around gloomily and clutches at his heart as if about to go into seizure, the plot keeps busy on minor characters who might either be victims or the second-string killer. Kinga (Eva Isanta), Waldemar's daughter, is tormented by local louts who sneer at her gypsy blood. Laurent Leroux (Jorge R. Lucas), a geeky splatter fan - "I see you like horror films." "Yes, I do. Especially ones about psychopaths. I never miss any." - has a crush on Kinga. Reverend Jonathan Leroux (Luis Maluenda), Laurent's father, darkly opines of the killings, "It looks as if someone was trying to help God do his job... sin can only lead to damnation. You'll reap what you sow." And Inspector Demage (Jesus Calle) thinks it might be an animal.

With the murders reduced to tiny cut-aways, the **WEREWOLF OF LONDON**-style monster unglimped until the half-way point (and hardly overexposed thereafter) and Naschy rarely interacting with the rest of the cast,

LICANTROPO spends most of the running time on its not-very-mysterious mystery. Mina gets on the right track with "Now is the weirdest part, I've looked at the chromosomes. They're only partly human... In fact, they're partly canine." Her father tells her "Consult Professor Cronenberg about it. You know his latest discoveries have revolutionised the world of science." But "There is something here which is beyond science, I can feel it."

Amazingly (and tiresomely), this acts as if it were the first werewolf movie ever made and Mina goes to the library to bone up on the legend, feeding us a voice-over lecture about lycanthropic lore. She is bothered by Rigary (Javier Loyola) and Czinka - "We used to belong to the Tribe of the Egyptians, but now we are the Living Dead." - who finally confirm that Waldemar is a werewolf and tell her where to dig up (literally) the silver bullets that one who loves him will have to use to put him out of his misery (which has increased since he slaughtered his wife and son - offscreen).

The finale segues from stalk-and-slash, as Kinga is chased by the gypsy-hating murderer, into farcical horror, as the lycanthropic Waldemar goes one-on-one with the weeding hoe murderer and Mina takes out the survivor. After the tragedy is over, the credits roll under a hideous song 'Gypsy Woman (Should Never Submit To Love)'. As Mina laments "Only love can destroy them and rid them of their terrible curse", I started to feel sorry for **LICANTROPO**, which - for all its homages to Universal Pictures - seems most like a 1970s TV movie (**MOON OF THE WOLF**, **DEATH MOON**), plodding through its transparent story as if **THE HOWLING** never happened, expecting you to gasp at conventions long lost in the mists of horror history.

The only concessions to the 1990s are two hilariously elementary morph effects (the werewolf's face is usually seen in clownish blue light) and Naschy's occasional tinkering with a word processor. This wouldn't be such a bad thing if the film were only true to its creator: lively, gory, ridiculous efforts like **FURY OF THE WOLFMAN**, **WEREWOLF'S SHADOW**, and **THE WEREWOLF AND THE YETI** may not be good exactly, but they have a likeable pulp idiocy and the occasional moment of Iberian gothic lyricism. Blandly dubbed into American and impersonating the dreariest sort of US TV, this manages to make Naschy anonymous and, set beside the likes of **DAY OF THE BEAST** or even (God help us) **KILLER BARBYS**, has no European feel at all. Naschy has made worse films, but none more negligible.

Kim Newman

THE LINK

aka **BLOOD LINK/EXTRASENSORIAL**
Italy/USA/West Germany, 1982

director: **Alberto De Martino**

screenplay: **Theodore Epstein, Max De Rita, Alberto De Martino**

director of photography: **Romano Albani**

editor: **Russell Lloyd**

music: **Ennio Morricone**

producer: **Robert Palaggi**

cast: **Michael Moriarty** (Keith/Craig Mannings), **Penelope Milford** (Julia), **Cameron Mitchell** (Bud Waldo), **Sarah Langenfeld** (Christine Waldo), **Martha Smith** (Hedwig), **Virginia McKenna** (ballroom dancer), **Geraldine Fitzgerald** (foster mother), **Robert K. Olszewski** [Reinhold K. Olszewski] (Inspector Hessinger), **Henriette Gonnermann** (woman tourist), **Alex Diakun** (Mr Adams).

Alberto De Martino has been around Italian exploitation for 35 years without really developing a personality. He paid 1960s dues with *peplum* (**HERCULES VS THE GIANT WARRIORS**), gothic (**THE BLANCHEVILLE MONSTER**), spaghetti western (**100,000 DOLLARS FOR RINGO**) and superspy (**OK CONNERY**) entries, then spent the 1970s specialising in fairly expensive Devil movies (**THE TEMPTER** and **HOLOCAUST 2000**) and gangster pictures (**IL CONSIGLIORE**) with bigish name American stars. I have a fondness for his 1976 **DIRTY HARRY** imitation **BLAZING MAGNUM**, with Stuart Whitman and Tisa Farrow. Of all Rome's imitation experts, De Martino is most able to mimic American styles and attitudes; therefore he is unlikely to win many friends among fans who like Italian movies because of their odd, un-American characteristics. In recent years, he had been working on lower budgets with the late David Warbeck (**7, HYDE PARK, MIAMI GOLEM**).

This *giallo* has the sort of plot that became familiar in the 1970s through re-use in Brian Clemens's *Thriller* TV series and American efforts like **THE EYES OF LAURA MARS**. In Hamburg, psycho Keith Mannings (Moriarty) preys on lonely old women, relaxing between murders by attempting to have sex with a prostitute. In America, Craig Mannings (also Moriarty) - a siamese twin brother separated at birth - has psychic flashes whenever Keith kills. Through a visit to his twin's senile foster mum (Fitzgerald), Craig

deduces that Keith has faked his death and, following clues that come in visions, heads for Europe.

While approaching his next victim, Keith is accosted by Bud Waldo (Mitchell), an ex-boxer who mistakes him for Craig, who once set his arm. Waldo wants to be certified fit for a fight but his daughter Christine (Langenfeld) tells Keith that the old pug has a bad heart. In a chilling sequence, Keith (still posing as Craig) spars in the park with Bud, showing his vicious side as he brutally beats the old man, prompting a disturbingly realistic heart attack. "*You want to kill me,*" Mitchell gasps, "*Why?*" The killer replies "*It'll be all over before you find out.*"

When Craig arrives in Hamburg, Keith tries to get Christine to kill him, but Craig convinces the girl of the truth. He confronts his crazy twin brother, whom he still wants to help rather than turn in, and they have a creepily flirtatious argument. Keith tries to convince Craig that their link is less psychic than psychosomatic, claiming "*You dreamed what you wanted me to be, a killer. So you could say 'I'm the good twin and he's the evil one.'*"

Craig, not as sexually dysfunctional as Keith, sleeps with Christine. As he showers afterwards Keith shows up and drugs him. The killer tries to have sex with Christine ("*I'm a disgusting lover*", he admits) before knifing her, leaving her blood all over the clothes Craig is pulling on when the police turn up. Into the mess comes Julia (Milford), Craig's doctor girlfriend, who uses Craig's psychic link to make an appointment with the killer. In an unlikely but nevertheless eerie finale, Julia seduces Keith, who is finally able to achieve orgasm with her, and takes advantage of his one careless moment to kill him. After a silly **CARRIE** nightmare (Craig imagines Keith rising from the slab to take his place), there's a further unsettling sex scene as Craig (?) starts brutally to make love to Julia, who wonders who her lover really is.

Though a familiar idea and surprisingly lacking in stylistic frills (the visions are just slightly blurred, there's only one shot through a fish tank and it's one of Morricone's milder scores), this is an unusual *giallo*. It tries to give characters some depth instead of trotting out the cynically conceived venal stick figures who usually populate the genre. Shot in English in Canada and Germany, it doesn't even feel Italian: it is professionally post-synched and most of the actors seem to use their own voices. Moriarty, not really given more than the standard good/evil twin characters to play, brings an American method commitment to the roles which contrasts

with the sleepwalking usually delivered by genre fixtures such as George Hilton and Anthony Steffen.

Like Jeremy Irons in **DEAD RINGERS**, Moriarty takes care to show the *similarities* as well as the differences between the brothers, which means the ending can be disturbing without needing to pull the trick of having the unexpected brother survive or even to specify whether Craig is psychologically or supernaturally being eclipsed by Keith. As in Bigas Luna's **REBORN**, Moriarty spends much of the film in uncomfortable sex scenes that actually further the plot and characterisations. In a subtle touch, Craig is given a distinctive gesture (twisting his hair) that comes into play not when it gives him away as he is impersonating his brother or vice-versa (which would be the usual development) but when he deliberately does it in a vain attempt to reassure Julia that he is himself.

The other name players are in for a scene or two apiece, but an unusually committed Mitchell is aptly Lennie-like as the old prize-fighter. Fitzgerald is quietly crazed as the institutionalised foster mother and McKenna (also in **HOLOCAUST 2000**) barely registers as Keith's ballroom dancing partner/victim. Like most *gualli*, **THE LINK** has more plot than it can comfortably deal with. A last-minute flashback, revealing that the young Keith murdered his parents, complicates already tangled plot explanations. It would be tempting to credit the film's better qualities to its cast rather than its writers and director, but this is at least a tactful frame for Moriarty's outstanding work, which is easily on a par with his efforts for Larry Cohen in **A RETURN TO SALEM'S LOT** and **THE STUFF** if not his personal best genre showing in Q.

Kim Newman

THE LORELEI'S GRASP

aka **LAS GARRAS DE LORELEI / WHEN THE SCREAMING STOPS**
Spain, 1972

writer/director: **Amando de Ossorio**

director of photography: **Miguel F. Mila**

editor: **Antonio Gimeno**

music: **Antón García Abril**

producers: **José Antonio Perez Giner, Ricardo Muñoz Suay, Ricardo Sanz**

cast: **Tony Kendall** [**Luciano Stella**] (Sirgurd), **Helga Liné** (Lorelei), **Silvia Tortosa** (Elke Ackerman), **Loretta** [Loli] **Tovar** (student), **Luis Induni** (Professor), **Victoria Hernández** (Teresa), **Javier de Rivera** (Preacher), **Luis Barboo** (Alberic), **Sergio Mendizábal** (Doctor), **Marisol Delgado** (Brigitte).

Like his fellow countryman Jess Franco, Spanish filmmaker Amando de Ossorio is a wayward talent, an auteur who vacillates between moments of brilliance and uninspired tedium with apparent ease. **THE LORELEI'S GRASP** is not, it has to be said, in the same league as his quartet of **BLIND DEAD** films, but nevertheless it is an enjoyably gory, sleazy romp. The storyline pillages the Rhineland myth of the siren, Lorelei, but contrives to throw in a bit of sub-Wagnerian Nibelungen legend for good measure; the end result is an hysterical visual *pot-pourri* of naked female flesh, bloody heart rippings and some of the worst examples of early seventies trendy fashion wear ever committed to celluloid. The slightly podgy Helga Liné is the Lorelei, an otherwise attractive woman who, when she isn't prancing around the banks of the Rhine in a tatty bikini, has the disconcerting habit of transforming into a Dr Who reject creature that likes to practise heart surgery without anaesthetic.

The plot is peppered with requisite oddball characters - there's an irritating blind hippy minstrel who mutters nonsense about "*the tale of the seven full moons*" before his timely demise, and an archetypal Mad Scientist who seeks to kill/cure Lorelei of her centuries old affliction. But what of sex/romance, I hear you cry? Well, there is an exclusive girl's school in the storyline, enabling the film-makers to show a plethora of semi-naked and annoyingly giggling teenyboppers, under the charge of a repressed, prudish female Professor, who appears to harbour a pathological mistrust of all men. To her disgust (and the girls' delight), a local hunter, Sirgurd (Stella) is billeted on them for their protection, though one could speculate that her fury at this masculine intrusion stems as much from his predilection for white bell-bottom trousers and wildly flapping shirt collars as from her sexual repression!

Soon Sirgurd is falling under the spell of Lorelei, whilst the prick-hating Prof is falling in love with him. In the meantime Lorelei has not been idle, despatching village maidens, the minstrel and the Mad Scientist in quick succession. There is only one thing to do: Sirgurd must swim into



the Lorelei's cave home and stab her with a dagger made from a piece of the Sword of Siegfried! Before the slightly anticlimactic finale there is time for a Nibelungen cat-fight in the Lorelei's skeleton-strewn dungeon; this allows Sirgurd to escape, blow up the cave and stab Lorelei - not bad for a night's work! Lorelei transforms back into a woman, via low budget stop-frame photography, and informs Sirgurd "*We will meet again in Valhalla*"; she dies, decays horribly, and in a cosmic colour-negative shot rides off on horseback, crying "*I'll be waiting...*" The credits roll and the viewer is woken up by the click and whirr of the video rewinding... no, I'm only joking!

In all honesty, I have a soft spot in my heart for this film, as ineffably daft as it undoubtedly is. Ossorio's film may be full of illogicalities, so-so acting and even worse flares, but these aspects are more than made up for by bravura gore effects (missing from the U.K. video, beware!), plentiful if somewhat coy nudity, and a determined attempt by the film-makers to give their best to a script that some would say doesn't deserve it. The end result is a film that is full of a lunatic verve, that defies the viewer not to have a good time; hell, I did anyway, I'm not proud...

Nigel Burrell

Addendum: Amando De Ossorio, loved and admired by horror fans around the world for his marvellous **BLIND DEAD** films, died in Madrid on the 13th of January, 2001, aged 83. This is contrary to rumours which stated he'd died in 1996. He was born in Portugal in 1918 and moved to Madrid in the 1940s, where he commenced a long career in the film industry, working as script editor and assistant director. His first film as director was **LA BANDERA NEGRA** in 1956. His last was **THE SEA SERPENT** in 1984

LORNA L'EXORCISTE
aka **LES POSSÉDÉES DU DIABLE**
France, 1974

director: **Clifford Brown** [Jess Franco]
screenplay: **Nicole Franco** [Nicole Guettard]
director of photography: **Étienne Rosenfeld**
music: **André Bénichou & Robert de Nesle**
producer: **Robert de Nesle**

cast: **Pamela Stanford** [Monique Delaunay] (Lorna Green), **Guy Delorme** (Patrick Mariel), **Lina Romay** (Linda Mariel), **Jacqueline Laurent** (Marianne Mariel), **Bigotini** [Richard De Conninck] (Doctor's assistant), **Catherine Lafferrière** (mad woman), **Howard Vernon** (Lorna's servant), **Jess Franco** (asylum governor), **Raymond Hardy** (Hotel porter), **Caroline Rivière**.

It could only be Franco's intention that the laborious lesbianism sequences of **LORNA L'EXORCISTE** be erotic as opposed to pornographic due to their frightening dullness, scenes which only add to the dizzying heights of confusion in this addition to Jess Franco's stable of inexplicable sequences and unidentifiable characters.

LORNA L'EXORCISTE follows the barest of plot structures. A loose theme is at play here, I would hazard a guess at the supernatural or devil possession being the key to the story, though in all fairness the title alone is the benefactor in this determination. When all the scenes have been looked at, **LORNA L'EXORCISTE** seems to be saying that Patrick (Delorme) is married to Marianne (Laurent), and they have a daughter called Linda (Romay). Patrick is also having an affair with a black witch - a striking young lady with obtrusive black eye make-up extending half-way up her forehead (Stanford), who could possibly be the Lorna of the title. Patrick often meets the black witch in a casino and they retire back to her apartment where they are constantly shadowed by two unsavoury looking 'minders'. Daughter Linda frequently has sex with a curly-haired girl who suddenly appears in her bed or in the bath whenever time is ripe for another **LORNA L'EXORCISTE** sex romp. Meanwhile, amidst all this supernatural bed-hopping, in an unidentified private clinic someplace, two doctors in white smocks supervise the locked room in which a naked girl gyrates on her bed. As the girl in the room gyrates she calls for Lorna to appear.

Back at the casino, Patrick, on another of his visits, seems to have riled the black witch in some way, and gets himself beaten up by the witch's two bodyguards. Later, he is to find solace in sex with his wife. Unbeknown to him though, he has been cursed by his ex-lover and inadvertently fucks bad seed into Marianne, from whose vagina suddenly crawl live crabs (!). Patrick stomps on the crabs as they scuttle across the floor. Oblivious to all the commotion in her parents room, Linda takes a shower, glowering provocatively at her father as he steps into the bathroom. He says nothing and leaves. Marianne continues her naked

convulsions around the bedroom as more crabs are discharged. She dies...

Patrick proceeds to the casino and shoots the black witch dead... the girl in the clinic writhes like a woman possessed as Linda mysteriously appears in the room before her. They engage in sex. By the time Patrick has returned home from the casino, Linda is back, stretched out on the sofa in a somewhat compromising position, naked but for her leather boots. Patrick moves in closer to his daughter and is stabbed by Linda as soon as he gets close enough to allow lust to get the better of him. The film ends.

Incredibly alienating, Franco has once again found the right ingredients to make a movie that appears to volley between several sketchy themes or a number of striking images (in this case, Marianne's crab discharge - a show-stopper if ever there was one), saying nothing tangible about any of them. This is typical of the borderline combination of sex and 'action' we have come to expect from Franco. **LORNA L'EXORCISTE** attempts to alleviate the rambling story with long, distracting sequences of sex, questionably necessary in a movie about an exorcist (if indeed exorcism is what **LORNA** is about), while taken as a softcore porn flick, the story is far too intimidating and distracting for the sex sequences. Typically, Franco's search for 'across the board' commercialism has rendered **LORNA L'EXORCISTE** with no solid base whatsoever. Psychedelic in every sense of the word, this is the kind of movie Jess Franco makes - and for that we should be grateful.

David Kerekes

LUCKER
aka **NECROPHAGOUS**
Belgium, 1986

writer/director/editor: **Johan Vandewoestijne**
director of photography: **John Kupferschmidt**
music: **Geert Beernaert, Peter Bonne**
producers: **J. Vandewoestijne, Filip Beys, André Coppens**

cast: **Nick Van Suyt** (John Lucker), **Helga Vandeveld** (Cathy Jordan), **Let Jodts** (whore), **Marie-Paule Claes** (Sharon), **Martine Scherre**, **Carry Van Middel** (Ann), **John Edwards** (friend), **Tony Castillo**, **Frank Van Laecke** (Verpleger), **Freek Neiryck**.

It's good to know that there are still a few directors prepared to air their scummiest obsessions on screen, and this Belgian film boasts some of the dirtiest laundry the genre's seen for quite a while. **LUCKER** is a wonderfully sordid piece of filth unlikely to be granted any sort of release in this country. The film's eponymous 'hero' is a slobbish, overweight necrophile whose tastes, shall we say, run to the older, more matured cadaver. That is, although he chooses as his victims fairly young women, he feels that corpses, like juggled hare or a good cheese, improve when left to rot for a while.

Necrophilia is a subject often alluded to in horror movies, and it provides a motivating subtext to several of the genre's classics. And yet in the seventies, when taboos were being trampled virtually into cliché, few movies explored the subject in all its potentially rancid detail. The frequency of its presence as a psycho-sexual undercurrent is undeniable, and repeatedly aestheticised in various studies of the genre, but one suspects that **LUCKER**'s bluntness in dealing with the act itself would find scant favour with the moral sensibilities of many critics. Metaphor be damned - **LUCKER** reminds us pointedly what necrophilia is really all about.

The only version I've seen of this film is a French language print without subtitles. Fortunately, as most of the events depicted take place with minimal dialogue, this proves only slightly limiting. Lucker himself coasts through the film on a few noncommittal grunts, only breaking his silence near the end, when he bursts into a frantic tirade against an audience of two trussed-up victims, in distressing scenes reminiscent of some aspects of the Ted Bundy case.

Most horror films have their set-pieces and **LUCKER** boasts one of extraordinary repulsiveness, elevating the movie to a very distinguished sleaze level. Our degenerate lead straps a young whore to a bed and then cuts her throat - she thrashes around bleeding profusely and eventually dies, after which he covers her with a sheet. We spend the subsequent 'week' in the stuffy apartment with him, whilst the passage of time is marked out by title cards and a voice-over flatly listing each day. We see him variously lounging around, drinking beer, smoking vast numbers of cigarettes and gazing inscrutably out of the window. Eventually, when he can no longer stand the anticipation, he returns to the bedroom and uncovers the corpse...

Forensic science has established that, for a human cadaver on land, green and purplish discolouration with gaseous swelling of the abdomen occurs in about five to six days. Lucker's lady friend is now bloated, mis-shapen and severely discoloured. Nonetheless he shows signs of considerable arousal. He fingers the slimy pubic mound, then licks his fingers, a scene guaranteed to disgust almost anyone. Foreplay over, he moves in for the main course. As for the following scenes of steaming passion; suffice to say they involve distressing close-ups of flabby male buttocks which ought to finish off those hardy souls still watching the movie.

At this point it seems right to point out that Nick Van Suyt, the no doubt charming and well-adjusted family man who plays John Lucker, turns in a real trouper's performance. It takes an actor of considerable *élan* to breathe life into such a scuzzy character, so despite my remarks about his *gluteus maximus*, all praise to him! It would be interesting to know if Mr Van Suyt includes **LUCKER** in his CV...

A set-piece as immense as the one described could unbalance a lesser film, with the surrounding scenes paling into blandness. This is not the case here - the extreme nature of Lucker's obsessive desire is carefully underscored in scenes which depict him wandering alone through sterile and deserted locations, emphasizing his 'outsider' status. From a virtually empty hospital, through a couple of dingy small towns, each setting contributes to the movie's detached and clinical tone. Vandewoestijne also appreciates the importance of spatial composition as a means of creating such a mood - in one extended and coldly impressive scene he shows Van Suyt walking listlessly down the centre lane of an apparently disused motorway. Grey concrete pillars supporting an overpass are employed as stylish but subdued framing.

There appears to have been a conscious decision to discourage attempts to understand or 'identify' with Lucker - his almost total silence and predilection for '70s-style mirrored shades inhibit such urges. This is in contrast to William Lustig's **MANIAC** for instance, a film not dissimilar to **LUCKER** in tone, but which used voice-over mumblings from lead actor Joe Spinell to draw audiences closer to the twisted mind of the killer. Unless the French dialogue contains nuances to the contrary, it would also seem that there is no desire to place Lucker's actions in any judgmental moral context. He just *is*, and the director has

maintained a detachment from considerations of 'right' and 'wrong' wholly in keeping with the alienated tone of the film. In this respect the film is almost as isolated from the genre it rests in as its lead character is from humanity.

The film terminates on an enigmatic note. The killer has dragged two women down into the cellars beneath the flat and subjects them both to hideous torments, including forced oral contact with a severed human head. One of the women survives, escaping through a maze of underground brick passageways. Rather suddenly, Lucker appears to get thrown down a lift shaft to his death, but in a confusing coda we see a figure in the street stoop to pick up an indecipherable photograph from the pavement. Seen just fleetingly, the figure resembles Lucker.

In recent years, the volume of seriously disturbing horror films has slowed to a trickle, whilst the trend towards dumb-assed playing for laughs has increased. It is all the more satisfying, then, to report that **LUCKER** is a sick, twisted, unremittingly repellent downer, which effectively puts Belgium of all places on the Euro-sleaze map.

Stephen Thrower

Addendum: Three years after directing this sick puppy, Vandewoestijne went on to produce **LES MÈMÉS CANNIBALES**, better known under it's Troma-distributed title, **RABID GRANNIES**. Sadly he has not directed any further films and was last credited as producer of 2002's **ENGINE TROUBLE** under his pseudonym, James Desert. Perhaps it's a coincidence, but the main victim in **LUCKER** has the same name as a similarly put-upon victim in Joseph Ellison's sadistic **DON'T GO IN THE HOUSE...** Nick Van Suyt is missing in action...

MACABRE
aka **MACABRO/MACABRE KISS/FROZEN TERROR**
Italy, 1980

director: **Lamberto Bava**
screenplay: **Pupi Avati, Roberto Gandus, Lamberto Bava, Antonio Avati**
director of photography: **Franco Delli Colli**
editor: **Piera Gabutti**
music: **Ubaldo Continiello**
producers: **Gianni Minervini, Antonio Avati**

cast: **Bernice Stegers** (Jane Baker), **Stanko Molnar** (Robert Duval), **Veronica Zinny** (Lucy Baker), **Roberto Posse** (Fred Kellerman), **Ferdinando Orlandi** (Mr Wells), **Fernando Pannullo** (Leslie Baker), **Elisa Kadigia Bove** (Mrs Duval).

Along with Dario Argento's **INFERNO**, Lamberto Bava's directorial debut is one of the best horror films of the last decade. As noted by Kim Newman in *The Monthly Film Bulletin* (June 1983) Lamberto began his career as a solo director in much the same way as his father had twenty years previously: "*(Mario Bava) was allowed to make LA MASCHERA DEL DEMONIO as a reward for completing IVAMPIRI when Riccardo Freda fell ill; and Lamberto has been able to finance MACABRO on the strength of SHOCK-TRANSFER-SUSPENCE-HYPNOS, a film credited to his father but almost completely the work of the son.*" Newman goes on to say that Bava Snr's influence is very apparent throughout the picture, and although this is true to an extent, perhaps the most direct influence is co-script writer Pupi Avati. In common with Avati's superb **THE HOUSE WITH THE WINDOWS THAT LAUGH**, **MACABRE** exudes an extremely eerie, obsessively morbid atmosphere, accentuated by calm, controlled direction and a sensitive, jazz-tinged score.

The skillfully constructed screenplay centres around a woman, Jane (Stegers) and her bizarre sexual obsession with the severed head of her lover which she keeps in the freezer compartment of her refrigerator. Her blind landlord (Molnar) becomes increasingly suspicious when he hears the sounds of love-making coming from her apartment upstairs. Searching her bedroom while she is out, he finds an ear-lobe on the unmade bed. He alerts Jane's estranged husband (Pannullo) but he refuses to have anything more to do with her. However, Jane's malicious young daughter (Zinny) discovers her mother's secret and puts the ear-lobe in her soup! Driven completely over the edge, Jane strangles her daughter and attacks Molnar, but is killed when he pushes her onto the hotplate of a table-top oven. In an inappropriate conclusion, all too derivative of **CARRIE**, Molnar is savaged to death by the severed head. Despite being an effective shock moment, this does seem like a tacked-on afterthought, suggesting that the writers weren't quite sure how to end their story. The rest of the script however is extremely well written and even the dubbed dialogue sounds convincing for a change.

MACABRE is set in New Orleans, but was actually shot almost entirely in the villa of Mussolini's mistress Claretta Petacci at Salò, the town in Northern Italy where Pasolini re-located his infamous adaptation of De Sade's *120 Days of Sodom*. Bava makes thorough use of the brooding, oppressive interiors and approaches his subject with tenderness and restraint, placing the emphasis firmly on the characters and their conflicting obsessions. He is ably assisted by the talents of Stegers, Zinny and the Yugoslavian born Molnar, all of whom give excellent performances. Stegers is especially impressive, even though she says "I found it difficult to take seriously...! mean, that head in the fridge!"

Bava's later work, **DEMONS** for example, takes its inspiration from various cinematic sources. **MACABRE** on the other hand has its roots in a literary tradition which encompasses writers like M.R. James and Edgar Allan Poe. Although allegedly based on a true series of events, and only taking on a supernatural aspect at the very end, the film is structured like a classic ghost story, with the emphasis on characterisation and plot development. In fact, the subtlety of Bava's approach is decidedly out of sorts with the period in which the film was made, and unfortunately, it was only moderately successful when released theatrically in Italy. Talking to Alan Jones in *Cinefantastique*, Bava explained that he could have pushed the grislier elements of the tale further, but wanted to explore the nature of the characters' obsessions. It was a wise choice, because **MACABRE** emerges as one of the most insidiously chilling pictures in recent memory.

Mark Ashworth.

Addendum: I first met the Avati brothers when I worked for them on **KNIGHTS OF THE QUEST** in 2000. Both talked fondly of **MACABRE**, but Antonio confirmed that Bava was chosen because of his work as assistant director on Mario Lanfranchi's **IL BACIO**: "*Undoubtedly that movie was a pile of shit, but even then it was obvious that Lamberto was very capable technically. When we had the idea for MACABRE, I thought of him instantly. I'd have preferred to move the head a bit more than we actually did though...*" Of Bernice Stegers, he had this to say: "*A very nice woman and a good actress. No problems with nudity either - when we shot exteriors she didn't even have any qualms about stripping off in the middle of the road to change costumes!*" - Mark Ashworth, 2002.

MALADOLESCENZA [Morbid Adolescence]
aka **JEUX INTERDITS DE L'ADOLESCENCE** /
SPIELEN WIR LIEBE

West Germany / Italy, 1977

writer/director: **Pier Giuseppe Murgia**
director of photography: **Lothar E. Stickelbrucks**
music: **Giuseppe Caruso, Jürgen Drews**
producer: **Franco Cancellieri**

cast (complete): **Lara Wendel** (Laura), **Eva Ionesco** (Silvia),
Martin Loeb (Fabrizio), **Xylot** (the dog).

JEUX INTERDITS DE L'ADOLESCENCE (literally 'Forbidden Games of Adolescence') is the uncut French video release of **MALADOLESCENZA**, Pier Giuseppe Murgia's disturbing and undeniably erotic study of adolescent sexual experimentation going badly wrong. Made in 1977, it's basically a soft-core, 'kiddie porn-lite' reworking of the theme of the eternal love triangle. The plot concerns two young teenagers - Fabrizio (Martin Loeb, initially seen wrestling naked with an Alsatian dog!) and Laura (Lara Wendel), friends since childhood - and their first fumbling steps into the big, bad adult world of sexuality. Fabrizio has a dark streak to his personality and delights in tormenting Laura emotionally and physically, and when blonde Silvia (Eva Ionesco) enters the picture he swaps partners, devoting his attention to this elfin newcomer. Soon both Fabrizio and Silvia are treating Laura like a slave, forcing her to watch as they make love, or delighting in debasing her by making her urinate before them. Events begin to get seriously out of hand and the whole twisted situation can only end in violence and death...

This is a powerful, visually poetic piece of film-making which pushes up against the boundaries of what can be displayed with regard to youthful sexuality (outside of the scuzzier reaches of the porno industry, of which the less said the better). The teenagers involved here appear a tad on the green side (the doll-faced blonde bitch Silvia is particularly child-like in her appearance, both clothed and otherwise), though it is probable that all three (clearly pubescent) youngsters were older than they appear to be. Be that as it may, **MALADOLESCENZA** was made during a decade when one could still openly discuss and/or show such subject matter in relatively mainstream films (as in Malle's painterly **PRETTY BABY**) without being accused of participating in or promoting under-age sex or child abuse. How times

change... Such a film would be unlikely to obtain a release, or even get made, in today's well-meaning but over-anxious times: imagine the tabloid fury, the lip-smacking, prurient, hypocritical headlines. Remember the Stateside hysteria that greeted Adrian Lyne's wonderful remake of Nabokov's **LOLITA**? **MALADOLESCENZA** makes that film look like a Disney family classic (and then some)...

Leaving morals out of it, artistically speaking **MALADOLESCENZA** is more intense and serious in tone than the soft-focus, nostalgic and equally child-woman obsessed *oeuvre* of David Hamilton, though I guess fans of the sublime **BILITIS** and **LAURA** would find Murgia's young girlies equally enchanting. Lara Wendel went on to do many Italian based exploitation and horror movies of which **RING OF DARKNESS** (1979), **YOU'LL DIE AT MIDNIGHT** (1985), and **GHOSTHOUSE** (1987) are good examples. You'll track down all those films with a great deal more ease than the eyebrow-raising **MALADOLESCENZA** - don't expect to find this one in your local Blockbuster.

Nigel Burrell

LA MASCHERA DEL DEMONIO (re-make)
aka **BLACK SABBATH / DEMONS 5: THE DEVIL'S VEIL**
Italy, 1990

director: **Lamberto Bava**
screenplay: **Giorgio Stegani, Massimo de Rita**
director of photography: **Gianfranco Transunto**
editor: **Daniele Alabiso**
music: **Simon Boswell**
producer: **Andrea Pizzeasi**

cast: **Debora Kinski** (Anibas/Sabina), **Eva Grimaldi**,
Michele Soavi, **Piero Nomi**, **Alessandra Bonarotta**, **Laura Devoti**, **Giovanni Guidelli**, **Stefano Molinari**, **Stanko Molnar**, **Mary Sellers**, **Ron Williams**.

In an example of ill-advised hubris, Bava *figlio* here re-makes his father's best-known movie and miraculously transforms the magical, Gogol-derived gothic fairytale into another stupid teens-in-terror picture which has more in common with his own time-waster **GRAVEYARD DISTURBANCE** than with the 1960 **MASCHERA**.

It opens with a crowd of unappealing youths (including

director Michele Soavi) skiing through the countryside in primary-coloured outfits that suggest one of those Global-Queensway ordeals that used to clutter up 'full supporting programmes', and then has them blunder into a crevice which contains the frozen corpse of Anibas (Kinski), a witch who was executed centuries earlier. The mask pounded onto her face is pulled off and she comes to life, sometimes possessing a lookalike girl (also Kinski), while the teenagers take refuge in an old church run by a blind cleric who can remember the original witch's reign of terror. Most of the young people are possessed and torment the priest in a frenzy of anti-clerical bloodletting that is just excessive enough to be distasteful although not so overblown as to be interesting. The thick hero takes an unconscionable length of time to deduce that the name of his girlfriend, Sabina, is that of the witch spelled backwards, a startling revelation that has to be accomplished by turning upside-down a personalised name-necklace that can be deciphered from the back of the stalls. Reliable Sergio Stivaletti provides rubber monsters for several ridiculous scenes, in one of which Kinski turns into a chicken-foot hag while having sex with the hero, and another with a gorgon-haired witch with glowing teeth ranting over some arcane rite. Evidently a quickie, made partially for Italian TV - and in case you've ever wondered, these films do play theatrically in Italy, and in this case received a justifiably harsh and vociferous reception from the Roman crowd I saw it with - this is a pointless footnote to the Bava filmography.

Kim Newman

MATADOR

Spain, 1986

director: **Pedro Almodóvar**

screenplay: **Pedro Almodóvar, Jesús Ferrero**

director of photography: **Ángel Luis Fernández**

editor: **Pepe [José] Salcedo**

music: **Bernardo Bonizzi**

producer: **Miguel Gomez, Andrés Vicente Gómez**

cast: **Assumpta Serna** (María), **Antonio Banderas** (Ángel), **Nacho Martínez** (Diego), **Eva Cobo** (Eva), **Julieta Serrano** (Berta), **Chus Lampreave** (Pilar), **Carmen Maura** (Julia), **Eusebio Poncela** (Comisario), **Bibí Andersen** (flower-seller), **Luis Ciges** (Guard)

MATADOR closely resembles Almodóvar's 1987 film, **LAW OF DESIRE**, sharing with it an air of swooning melodrama and lushly photographed in a style just this side of lurid. Melodrama can be described as a condition of heightened contrivance, and it is in this mode - always on the brink of the ridiculous, of the '*Oh, p-lease!*' response - that he constructs his narratives. **MATADOR** is typical; riddled with absurd coincidences and warped, unlikely character motivation. What's more, Almodóvar gives full reign to his taste for the miraculous with a particularly left-field plot twist which sends the police rushing after the two homicidal leads with only Angel (Banderas)'s telepathic visions to guide them. What is this weird fascination Almodóvar has with psychic powers? The plot of **WHAT HAVE I DONE TO DESERVE THIS?** was already off-the-wall when, in the last 15 minutes or so, a little girl wallpapers the kitchen for Carmen Maura's harrassed housewife using telekinesis to move the brushes and paper! In neither film is there any special significance attached to the paranormal - which is probably why somehow it works. Nonetheless, watching Almodóvar's plots unfold is like the old cartoon joke where someone runs off the edge of a cliff and continues in a straight line without falling... until they look down. Which is why it doesn't really pay to analyze the plot contrivances too much.

On the other hand, **MATADOR** does come over as more serious than usual for Almodóvar. The tone is sombre and the performances less manic. Even the script, though replete with ironic asides, seems to be more soberly intended. The theme (of the correlation between love and death) is pursued in a brazenly literal manner, and Almodóvar seems almost oblivious to the pit of pretentiousness he could easily slip into, with a script which has characters assert things like "*You and I are alike - we're both obsessed with death*". Even the film's pacing is uncharacteristically slow and studied. After **WHAT HAVE I DONE TO DESERVE THIS?**, which I regard as his best film by far, the director's customary class-consciousness is on vacation too, with a central cast all living in material comfort, and few glimpses of the street-level milieu he depicts with such sharp perception elsewhere. That isn't to say that **MATADOR** is no fun. The opening sequence, usually the only one mentioned in horror publications, depicting crippled bullfighter Diego Montez jerking off to a compilation of violent scenes from Mario Bava's **BLOOD**

AND BLACK LACE and Jesus Franco's **BLOODY MOON** is amusing and darkly twisted, whilst Angel's attempt to rape his tutor's girlfriend during a torrential downpour is made hilarious by his victim's completely unfazed contempt for his effort. The black humour of the scene is compounded later when Angel, having gone to the police to confess, is told by the girl's crazy mother, *"Don't bother, you've done enough already."* Behind the sick jokes lies a customary dark tone, though. Angel's mother, a rabid fundamentalist, tells his attorney that she *"tried in vain to instill in him a fear of himself"* and refuses to believe in his innocence when even the police are satisfied that he has confessed to a string of murders due to mental imbalance. For fans of **BLOOD AND BLACK LACE**, there is a darkly exaggerated version of the scene in Bava's film where the *haute-couture* models prepare to go onstage. In Almodóvar's take, the girls' drug problems are so bad they vomit down their dresses before staggering out to tread the catwalk.

For some reason, the director has refrained from ridiculing or attacking his police detective character (in this film played by Poncela) - prior to this film, a pricklier relationship to authority figures was the norm. However, despite being given stylish suits and a likeable manner, he is excluded from the passion play of the main characters, left as merely an adjunct to the central action. The film really belongs to Assumpta Serna and Nacho Martínez as the murderous lovers, contriving to reach their sexual climax whilst killing one another, a final act timed to perfection as the sky is darkened by an eclipse of the sun.

Stephen Thrower

MES NUITS SONT PLUS BELLES QUE VOS JOURS
aka **MY NIGHTS ARE MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN YOUR DAYS**

France, 1989

director: **Andrzej Zulawski**
screenplay: **Andrzej Zulawski**, freely adapted from the novel by **Raphaële Billetdoux**
director of photography: **Patrick Blossier**
editor: **Marie-Sophie Dubus**
music: **Andrzej Korzynski**
producers: **Alain Sarde**

cast: **Sophie Marceau** (Blanche), **Jacques Dutronc** (Lucas de Bonneval), **Valérie Lagrange** (Blanche's mother), **Myriam Mézières** (Edwige), **Laure Killing** (Inès), **François Chaumette** (Concierge), **Sady Rebbot** (François), **Salim Talbi** (Bellboy), **Marc Zammit** (Guy), **Michael Goldman** (Barnabé).

For Zulawski, relationships are always in jeopardy from the existential condition of the partners; at least one must be suffering some form of Kierkegaard's "sickness unto death" before they can become subjects of his jaundiced gaze. The credits roll over a rapid montage of colour brain-scan images, set to Korzynski's insistent, neurotic theme, although the subsequent pace is quite leisurely. The plot introduces Lucas (Dutronc), a man attempting to deal with the discovery that he has a brain tumour. Told that he can expect to experience personality distortion as a result, he resolves to maintain his grip on sanity and memory, becoming a compulsive talker as a way of holding on to as many words as possible. He becomes fixated on the traumatic memory of his parents' deaths, but perhaps his bizarre wordplay and vivid memories are signs of an insidious derangement? On the other hand, perhaps he's summoning mere 'spectres' of madness to then 'stage-manage' the idea of insanity, a state of mind otherwise abhorrent and terrifying? By simulating the symptoms of derangement, Lucas remains in control. (Then again, all madmen are simulators, aren't they? Lost to any sense of the genuine, they fragment in a way which both avoids and expresses their condition). Zulawski's film is comparable in this respect to Samuel Fuller's **SHOCK CORRIDOR**. But where Fuller's story required an external correlative and catalyst (a 'crime' - the murder of a mental patient) for the protagonist to investigate, Lucas's dilemma remains frustratingly internal - that is until he becomes involved with Blanche (Marceau), a woman whose stage act as a psychic performing to the idle rich masks what may be real telepathic ability.

Embarking on this affair leads him to a huge, opulent coastal hotel in Biarritz. Whilst swanning around at the elegant resort, Blanche, accompanied by her nasty husband and her man-hungry mother, hang out with a crowd of shallow decadents from the Paris fashion-scene. This shrieking coterie of coke-sniffing couturists exists in a permanent state of posturing hysteria. Away from these petulant creatures, Lucas and Blanche have sex all over the



Dutronic and Marceau in Zulawski's MES NUITS SONT PLUS BELLE QUE VOS JOURS

classic evil child behaviour in Lamberto Bava's wonderful MACABRE



place, whilst arguing about death and madness in fervently gallic style. Lucas's behaviour turns ever more eccentric, as he takes to wandering the labyrinthine hotel in a grubby white tuxedo jacket and his socks. *Bonhomie* develops between Lucas, the weird, Pee-Wee Hermanesque bellboy (Talbi) and the lavishly solicitous Concierge (Chaumette), whose indulgence of his troubled guest borders on the hallucinatory. Chasing Blanche with a live crab in each hand, watching his brainscan images on video, Lucas finds his mind drawn more and more to a traumatic childhood recollection of his father and mother being dragged lifeless from a lake. His flashback memories show him clutching a stuffed toy and blanking off emotionally from the sight. Blanche too has personal traumas which stem from bearing mute witness to the violence her abusive father visited on her mother. The mood of the film grows as unstable as the characters and, amidst the strange goings on at the hotel, the apparition of someone in a giant pink rabbit costume tilts the film into surreal farce...

Lucas's flirtation with derangement eventually leads to nihilism, only barely averted after he assaults Blanche during an argument, grabbing her by the hair in the hallway of his luxurious quarters and bouncing her head off the walls. In the aftermath of this convulsive scene, the tormented couple stagger out onto the beach and stride into the sea together. As the waves crash over them, they stagger around - their acting momentarily put aside? In a brief glance into camera, Dutronc's eyes suggest unfeigned amusement at the force of the tide, before credits roll over a vast ocean panorama.

As in *LA FEMME PUBLIQUE*, Zulawski's theme appears to be the self-conscious exposure of interior states of mind - secrets, memories - through acting and performance. Blanche's act consists of 'revealing' personal facts about members of her audience for the amusement of the rest - ultimately she loses control of this display, exposing herself both psychologically and physically. Lucas has been shaken in his sense of self by the revelation of a physical abnormality in his brain. Searching for the evidence in his subjective perception leads to demonstrations of alienation (sitting cross-legged and half dressed in a ragged tuxedo in the middle of a Parisian street), as well as sundry grand mannerisms and ludicrous behavior. Whether ostentatiously ordering brains at a restaurant or chasing Marceau around with shellfish, his emphasis is on trying to

externalize the threat of madness, in preference to being lost inside (with) it. Further elaboration of the theme comes from the depiction of the fashion milieu, where a relentless parade of glamour exemplifies what Jean Baudrillard terms the "superficial abyss". The play of appearances in fashion is everything, emotion and nakedness enter as merely another surface. The fatuous squabbling cliquiness of fashion leads to hysteria, fed by the giddy transience of endless surface. Fashion functions like gossip in a world without secrets, where interiority is 'dolled-up' and reproduced in its' obscene form as self-expression - the cat-walk.

The notion of telepathy as an escape from the tyranny of language is always going to be entangled with fears of exposure and invasion, of finding out things it might be preferable not to know, as well as the possibility of it leading to an immediate reductiveness. 'So that's who you really are' as a gambit between lovers can only signal the end. Both Lucas and Blanche have their psychological traumas exposed in the film - but do they reveal anything unique? After all, everybody's got a mystery. The possible appeal to Jungian archetypes, represented by immersion in the sea, suggests a merging that renders down subjective difference into a collective swamp.

This is a moving and beautiful film, one where Zulawski works his magic very subtly. Like his later film, the intimate epic *LA FIDELITÉ*, it takes a while to build, reaching a rich emotional complexity by such gentle increments that you're surprised and shaken when it's over. The sadness of the film - which is its keynote, alongside a dry absurdist humour - comes from the depiction of two troubled people trying to make contact through their individual pain. Lucas assaults Blanche during the intensity of their passion for each other, thus replaying her family trauma. The film ends in the sea, recalling the deaths of Lucas's parents. With this unhappy suggestion that we are doomed to repeat the mistakes and disasters of the past, or at least to be haunted by them, all that stands between us and nihilism is the smile on Dutronc's face and the reality Marceau and Dutronc respond to in the final moments. They, and we, are just players. With that moment of realisation comes the possibility of love and continuation.

Stephen Thrower

LES MINETS SAUVAGE aka **TOUGH AND TENDER**
France, 1984

director: **Jean-Daniel Cadinot**
screenplay: **Cadinot and Gerard Mandrin**
director of photography: **Yvan Leonard**
editor: **Francis Pierre**
music: **Klaus Schulz** (uncredited)
producer: **Marie-France Cadinot**

cast: **Didier Hamal** (new boy), **Jean Louis Vaissieres** (new boy's lover), **Luigi di Como** (head rapist), **Gerard Mandrin** (protector), **Patrick Seigneur** (blonde bully), **Pierre Buisson**, **Jonathon Levy**, **Omar Salam**, **Jacques DeRives**.

A car drives along a lonely provincial highway as dusk falls. It turns into a driveway approaching an awesome looking chateau. The steel gates close firmly behind. Handcuffed, and accompanied by two plain-clothed guards, a young man is taken into the governor's office. He is given a stern lecture - his welcome to Borstal. His jeans are removed and an odd metal object is inserted in his rectum. Then he is kitted out and shown to the dormitory. Here several young men representing different degrees of cuteness and ruggedness, clad only in underwear, stand in an obstreperous line at the head of their bunks. They glance lasciviously at their 'innocent' new inmate as he's shown to his bed. An austere-minded warder delivers a short, no hanky-panky speech and departs - lights out.

Fun time...a first lad approaches the new guy's bunk, forcing him to open his mouth and take it. The ecstatic cries, sighs and protests are to no avail. Several more lads descend upon him and he is soon naked, forced into a series of compromising positions as the fraternity take turns to restrain him and fill his mouth and rear. Eventually the warder breaks up the orgy. But the innocence is irrefutably lost. Next day he is raped again over a log-pile. But another, tougher new inmate arrives. They become friends and later lovers. There's lots more hardcore sex, and revenge is taken against the bully-boy rapists.

This is gay pornography at its best, as only the French know how. A structured narrative story-line and multiple layers of carefully formulated sexual fantasy. Forget macho-acting Barbie dolls like Jeff Stryker (dominant male American trash). You identify with the new guy, your ultimate desires of passivity unleashed. Make no mistake -

this is pure fantasy. The cries and hurt expressions of the victim are easily discernible as false acting. Below this subterfuge, the pleasure realised - and the tongue-in-cheek comprehension of the situation by the actor - is obvious. (Roland Barthes once argued that pornography was the most authentic cinema available. The actors are forced to suspend their acting ability to perform what can only be real.)

Since 1981, Jean-Daniel Cadinot has directed a series of gay porn movies which transcend any previously made. In one scene, the inmates are left by their teacher in a flower-arranging class. As soon as teacher disappears, they undo their jeans and masturbate en masse over the table of flowers. These are Genet's children after all! (The anthropological significance of this scene is obvious, suggesting the clandestine sexual rites performed by Amazonian headhunter tribes - the thought of which, incidentally, used to give Artaud nightmares, according to letters he sent to André Breton...) It is also precisely this esoteric fraternity of unbridled promiscuity which locates the inmates' brotherhood and power over their tyrannical and ingenuous 'masters'. Allusions to Foucault perhaps? For the older, uglier authority figures are excluded from this pleasure play. Like Reich's fascists, the rulers' frustrations can only be released in acts of violence against the inmates.

This is one movie where 'Non' is French for 'Yes!', which excludes this film from an otherwise obvious Sadean interpretation, although inescapable references to the texts of the Marquis remain. The remote prison/chateau, juxtaposed power relationships, ugliness contra beauty, loss of non-existent innocence, reductions to pure flesh - but this is not a conventional SM fantasy. By any other standards of pornographic cinema, Cadinot's films are beautifully crafted. The camera is constantly re-positioned, seeking out new angles of eroticism. Lighting is atmospheric, and the music more sombre and apoplectic than the usual tacky disco riffs endemic to this genre. Regular room changes and use of outdoor locations curtail any possibility of this becoming another static bedroom spunk opera. One criticism - it is a pity that the climactic rape scene occurs so early in the story. Although sex scenes continue to 'come thick and fast', the intensity of the first rape is not repeated. For most of us, the film has done its job only a quarter of the way through. Still, **LES MINETS SAUVAGE** remains for me the best that the genre can offer.

Chris Barber

MONDO WEIRDO: A TRIP TO PARANOIA PARADISE
 aka **JUNGFRAU AM ABGRUND /**
VIRGIN ON THE EDGE
 Austria/Germany, 1990

writer/director/editor/producer: **Carl Andersen**
 director of photography: **George Eisnecker**
 music: **Modell D'oo**

cast: **Jessica Franco Manera** (Odile), **Soledad Marcegnac**,
Niranda Mariaux, **Frank Khunne**, **Klaudia Keimel**, **David**
Hollmann, **Ron Lourid**, **Barbara Bourbon**, **Ronnie Urini**,
Irina Von Karlstein.

The poster for **MONDO WEIRDO** presents the movie as being another **MONDO MOD** - "Swing on the wildest trip of your life", the poster says. Let's get it straight first of all, **MONDO WEIRDO** has nothing whatsoever to do with the 'Mondo' genre. Certainly it's weird, but in an underground feature film sort of way.

Austrian director Carl Andersen dedicates his movie to Jesus Franco and Jean-Luc Godard, but if truth be known Andersen's film owes more to the 'Death Trip' films of Richard Kern, following as it does a story which can only be described as twisted, illogical and full of punks. It begins nowhere and goes nowhere. Along the way, out of the rambling aimlessness of it all, **MONDO WEIRDO** does maintain a certain fascination.

There is no synchronized sound. The story is illuminated with narrative cards written in English, while any actual dialogue is more often than not a voice-over spoken in Dutch. Some of the songs on the soundtrack are sung in French.

Odile, a 15 year-old girl, menstruates in the shower; she tastes the blood. Putting on her post-punk clothes, she goes to a club where Modell D'oo, a terrible band, plays. The barman serves up a dead fly cocktail while a lesbian couple make out on a table. The sight of this drives Odile out of the club, where a showroom dummy in a shop window encourages a sexual fantasy; Odile dreams that she is taken away in the back of a van and has sex with a strange man. This is one of Odile's many fantasies - both sexual and homicidal - and it isn't long before dream and reality are merged into one. Whether this merging is Andersen's intention is somewhat questionable, particularly when the viewer is presented with such intertitles as "*After a car-crash (off-*

screen) Arthur and Franz are looking for a helping hand." The fact that the viewer has had no introduction to Arthur and Franz doesn't seem to enter into it. (And yes, the card spells out the fact that the car crash we can't see is off-screen...)

Arthur and Franz go to a house for help. One gives the other a blow-job, and in an intangible shift of location, Odile is seen wandering through a public toilets where she encounters a guy jerking off and a woman taking a leak. The sight causes our girl to throw up in a urinal.

About half-way through **MONDO WEIRDO**, an up to now anonymous young lady is suddenly revealed to be the blood-bathing Transylvanian countess, Elizabeth Bathory (spot David Pirie's book *The Vampire Cinema* being used as a source of reference by Odile).

"Elizabeth Bathory invites Odile to a strange dinner with strange people and very strange things going on!" another notice reads, and Odile sits alone at a dinner table. In an upstairs room however, Ilona - whoever she might be - is to be found helping Elizabeth put a condom on Franz. The three engage in sexual intercourse, after which the two girls hack at Franz with a cut throat razor and then drink his blood. One of the girls is pissing over Franz when Odile interrupts. A number of unsavoury acts follow including Odile getting her neck bitten by Bathory, and Arthur being given a hand-job then castrated upon climax. The sex fun is brought to an abrupt end for Elizabeth and Ilona however when they manage to somehow impale themselves on a pair of antlers. (?)! The movie closes with Odile apparently back at the beginning of the picture in the club where the band is playing. She sees the lesbian couple making out, and instead of running away decides to join in.

The trouble with most 'underground' films is that they tend to dilute their own shock value. This they do by revealing themselves as an underground film - expect underground film-type shocks! - by having everyone walk around dressed in regulation post-punk skin-tight pants, and trenchcoats. Kind of like glimpsing the closing paragraphs at the end of a book then expecting to be surprised by the ending. **MONDO WEIRDO** is full of skintight jeans, jackboots and trenchcoats, but fortunately it's also crazy enough to hold the viewer's attention throughout.

MONDO WEIRDO is Andersen's second feature film. His first was **I WAS A TEENAGE ZABBADOING** (aka **VAMPYROS SEXOS**), made in 1988, which laid the groundwork for this **WEIRDO** with its gratuitous helping of sex, vomiting scenes and the godawful Model D'oo

soundtrack (a catatonic Euro no-wave synthesizer sound, with some of the songs managing to find their way into both movies). While the plot of **TEENAGE ZABBADOING** is just as unfathomable as **MONDO WEIRDO**, the latter at least doesn't expose us to the randomly inserted 'behind the scenes' antics of the crew as **ZABBADOING** does. **MONDO WEIRDO** takes itself a little more seriously and works better because of it.

Yet in all seriousness, although Andersen is striving for an art-house horror picture, the possibility of filming hardcore sex scenes proves to be too much of a temptation, and Andersen often forsakes his attempted re-make of **DAUGHTERS OF DARKNESS** for a throwaway shot of a blow-job. A tacked-on pre-credit voice-over doesn't help either. With a laboured German accent, a certain Dr Rosenberg warns of the movie to follow, expounding psychoanalytic drivel. According to Rosenberg, a young girl's encounter with two lesbians at a rock concert leads to a sexuality disorder and a subsequent need to "destroy other people's sexuality." **MONDO WEIRDO**, Rosenberg claims, "shows exactly what happened in that girl's dreams...a strange and bizarre world."

While not exactly destroying other people's sexuality, or looking too convincing in her role as a sweet 15 year-old, Manera's Odile - roaming around the picture with a staid expression and wearing a vest - manages to convey some semblance of lost innocence, or at least as much as can be expected, given that she is never without her jack boots or skin-tight jeans. When you take into account that **MONDO WEIRDO**'s leering camera is on hand whenever some girl removes her bra, it becomes difficult to view Odile's seduction within context of the movie's convoluted storyline. For no matter how weird it may look, **MONDO WEIRDO** is really nothing more than Andersen's excuse to film Odile - and any number of considerably good-looking girls - nude and screwing

David Kerekes

Addendum: Andersen's more recent films include **KILLING MOM** (1994), **TITTY TWIST IN HELL - ORPHEA AND EURYDIKE IN LOVE** (1996), **THE LUXURY OF LOVE/MONDO WEIRDO 2** (1998), **DIE SEHNSUCHT NACH DEM MEHR** (2001), **ANDERSENS MÄRCHEN VON DER LIEBE** (2001), and his entry in the 'Strangest Long Title' sweepstakes, **LICK AN APPLE LIKE A PUSSY:**

THE MOVIE STANISLAWSKI NEVER MADE (2002). Oh, and there's another film, **SHE'S CURIOUS: SEX**, in preparation.... Carl Andersen and colleagues have a web-site: <http://www.cinema-veritable.de>

THE MOONLIGHT SONATA
aka **KUUTAMOSONAATTI**
Finland, 1988

writer/director: **Olli Soinio**
director of photography: **Kari Sohlberg**
editor: **Irma Taina**
music: **Antti Hytti**
producer: **Heikki Takkinen**

cast: **Tiina Björkman** (Anni Stark), **Kari Sorvali** (Arvo Kyyrölä), **Kim Gunell** (Johannes), **Mikko Kivinen** (Sulo Kyyrölä), **Soli Labbart** (Mom Kyyrölä), **Ville-Veiko Salminen** (Carli), **Risto Salmi** (Motel owner), **Rolf Labbart** (Man from the radio), **Toivo Tuomainen** (shopkeeper), **Esa Anttila** (concerned policeman).

Similar in its plotting to American rural horrors like **THE TEXAS CHAIN SAW MASSACRE** or **MOTHER'S DAY**, this Finnish suspense film is nevertheless shot with all the high style expected of the European art cinema, with lovely snowscapes and carefully selected faces adding to the visual quality of what is basically a formula lady-in-peril picture. Gorgeous pouting model Björkman - as they say in *Variety*, 'a looker with int'l pot'l' - is fleeing from a breakdown to a remote cottage, where she gets pestered by a local family of degenerates. The lead heavy is a disgusting yokel of the **STRAW DOGS** variety, who is constantly making lewd advances and slobbering, but the real menace comes from his hulking, retarded brother, who is confined by day to a woodshed, but is allowed out at night to bay at the moon. Early on, the heroine's dog disappears, but rather than turning up as the expected corpse nailed to a door, the animal is adopted by the ox-like lunatic, who has been abused by the brothers' silent old mother until he can only relate to similarly whipped animals. The heroine's resourceful younger brother turns up and puts his skill with gadgets to good use as they have to defend their house against an attack by the maniacs, with left-over bits of scalextric and some handy petrol. With welcome touches of black humour,

as the retard uses a scythe to deal with an interfering TV licence inspector, and excellent performances, this is certainly acceptable by international splatter movie standards, if a bit on the ponderous, tame side. Given the choice, I'd rather see another Olli Soinio movie than another Aki Kaurismaki.

Kim Newman

MURDER BY DESIGN

aka **LA VITTIMA DESIGNATA/SLAM OUT**
Italy, 1971

director: **Maurizio Lucidi**

screenplay: **Augusto Caminito, Fulvio Gicca, Aldo Lado, Maurizio Lucidi, Antonio Troiso**

director of photography: **Aldo Tonti**

editor: **Alessandro Lucidi**

music: **Luis Enríquez Bacalov**

producer: **Vico Pavoni**

cast: **Tomas Milian** (Stefano Argenti), **Pierre Clémenti** (Count Mateo Tiepolo), **Ottavio Alessi** (Inspector Finzi), **Marisa Bartoli** (Luisa Argenti), **Bruno Boschetti, Sandra Cardini, Luigi Casellato, Katia Christine** (Fabienne Belanger), **Carla Mancini, Enzo Tarascio** (Stefano's business associate).

This is a well-made but hugely derivative psychological drama which aches to be more than it is, laden with faux-classical music and told at a stately crawl probably meant to evoke the films of Malle and Visconti. Hopping between Milan and Venice, it tells of the fate that befalls the unfortunate - and rather hopeless - Stefano Argenti (Tomas Milian), a fashion designer in hock to his wife Luisa's business fortune. He encounters a dandified creep, the young Count Mateo Tiepolo (Pierre Clémenti), whilst holidaying in the Decaying City with his mistress, Fabienne (Katia Christine). This fey deceiver engages Stefano in intimate conversation and before you can say 'Strangers on a Gondola' has offered to kill Luisa in return for Stefano killing the Count's sadistic brother. Needless to say, complications ensue when Stefano tries to disentangle himself from the Count's phantom conspiracy, and Luisa is soon despatched. Enough skill is brought to the psychological overtones of dominance and guilt to propel the story's unlikely premise (which, as in

Hitchcock's film, strains credulity if considered too long), and the web of intrigue is elegantly constricted around the hapless lead. Once we accept that Stefano's guilty conscience prevents him from discussing the blackmail case with the police or his mistress, his fate is sealed.

It's unusual to see Milian, commonly known for his tough-guy roles, playing a rather unsympathetic character who's so helpless in his social and personal relations. Dominated verbally and financially by his sardonic wife, toyed with in a distinctly queasy manner by the ever-so-friendly Count, Stefano even undergoes the humiliation of having to acquiesce when a police inspector deliberately mimics his domineering wife's method for shutting him up. His own plan to wriggle from the coils of Count Mateo is a bungled affair, which involves sneaking off back to his childhood home of Venezuela with fraudulently obtained cash, and even his love for the beautiful young Fabienne is tricked into a betrayal. The Count drives her to the graveside during Luisa's funeral, and Stefano feels compelled by the eyes of the police to feign indifference to his true love (an ironic reversal of a situation in Lucio Fulci's adaptation of the classic doomed love story **BEATRICE CENCI**, also starring Milian). There's a final twist in the tail of this plagiaristic exercise which belatedly tries to separate it from its illustrious predecessor, but the Italian film remains as entrapped by Highsmith and Hitchcock as Stefano is by the Count.

Stephen Thrower

NAKED LUNCH

Canada, 1991

director: **David Cronenberg**

screenplay: **Cronenberg**, derived from *The Naked Lunch* by **William S. Burroughs**

director of photography: **Peter Suschitzky**

editor: **Ronald Sanders**

music: **Howard Shore, Ornette Coleman**

producers: **Jeremy Thomas, Gabriella Martinelli**

cast: **Peter Weller** (William Lee), **Judy Davis** (Joan Lee/Joan Frost), **Roy Scheider** (Dr Benway), **Ian Holm** (Tom Frost), **Julian Sands** (Yves Cloquet), **Michael Zelnicker** (Martin), **Nicholas Campbell** (Hank), **Monique Mercure** (Fadela), **Joseph Scorsiani** (Kiki), **Robert A. Silverman** (Hans).

*"He thinks he is/More interesting/Than the world./
And though the skins are thin/He knows it's up to him/
To go out or stay in./ Oh, I'll stay in...I'll stay in."
(The Fall - No Xmas for John Quays)*

THE MEDIUM'S A MESS - FORM IN NAKED LUNCH

"Why would anybody want to watch a scum show like Videodrome? Why did you watch it, Max?", asks Barry Convex, sneering at **VIDEODROME's** Max Renn. He might also have asked: 'Why would anybody want to film a scum book like *Naked Lunch*?'

While Cronenberg is happy to refer to **NAKED LUNCH** in interviews as comparable to **VIDEODROME**, it differs from the earlier film in a crucial respect, and in a way that exemplifies one of **NAKED LUNCH's** major flaws. The concept of 'first-person narrative' which informs **VIDEODROME** is 'opened up' to another equally 'first person' participant - the viewer. Indeed, it actively implicates the viewer in its unfolding scenario. The entire story is about visual perception and the relationships between viewer, the look itself, and that which is seen, perceived. When Max Renn begins to hallucinate **VIDEODROME's** mutant technology - pulsing, breathing TV sets and literal 'software' - we can accept these metaphorical conceits and plastic puns because we are involved personally, they occur as something shared in the dialectic between ourselves and the screen. (Who hasn't succumbed to the urge to touch the TV and its screen during those key **VIDEODROME** scenes of Max doing likewise?). The film allows both audience-and-image and artist-and-image the space to engage as equal parts of a complex whole.

In **NAKED LUNCH**, Cronenberg once again embarks on a 'first-person' trajectory, and attempts to use William Lee's hallucinations to elaborate and throw light on the Creative Spirit (his capitals, it's fair to say...). However, this time Cronenberg's devices, like the Bug-writer, are at best an opaque and introverted indulgence; at worst they seem like superficial gestures to maintain his 'auteur' consistency. There is no room for audience in the relationship between a writer and his wretched typewriter. The bug-writer functions as a self-interrogation device for the person 'using' it. In other words, Cronenberg asks us to look over his shoulder whilst he wrangles with himself about the source of his creative spirit, or - if you will - urge. **VIDEODROME**, strange though it may seem considering its' gradually

increasing gloom, is a film exciting in its desire to "get you involved...expose you to the Videodrome signal." (Harlan's words - paranoia is part of the fun after all...). **NAKED LUNCH** arrogantly excludes the viewer from anything more involved than the role of silent admirer; gee, Mr Cronenberg, what a bizarre and brilliant imagination you must have, to be sure! **NAKED LUNCH's** P.O.V. is almost myopic, and its character quite selfish - watching it is akin to being grudgingly allowed a walk-on role in a film where one person hogs all the parts. There is a hubris, an egotism to Cronenberg's approach which is very off-putting, especially since all this monomaniac wants to do is, essentially, co-opt our eyes to gaze the more intently at his artistic navel.

When 'William Lee' arrives at the border with Annexia, the guards demand that he prove himself to be a writer. Dismissing his "writing device" - a gold-plated fountain pen indeed! - they provoke a re-enactment of Lee's shooting of Joan, this time the Frost 'version'. Cronenberg's insistence on centre-staging this event from Burroughs's life, his brandishing of it - shown twice, it is given a kind of negative talismanic significance - is evidence of a further flaw; this time with regards mis-interrogation of Burroughs's value as an artist. Basically, the movie asks the least interesting of questions; why did this man write what he wrote? By elevating the 'Why?' of the novelist's writing above the 'What?' much of this supposed adaptation is wasted. The answer crashes into banality. Why? Because he shot his wife. The answer completely by-passes an essential aspect of William Burroughs, which lies in the savagery of his work's contemporary political critique; of 20th Century Man's lust for dominance over others, and his concurrent acceptance of the slave-state, pathetic fear of consequences that discarding false consciousness entails, love of received ideas clung to in preference to active self-determined thought...

Cronenberg's total avoidance of the political dimension of the book, whose title his film bears, leads to a statement which has become unavoidable. Whatever this movie is, it is not *The Naked Lunch*. Burroughs definition of the title as "...the frozen moment when everyone sees what's on the end of each fork" is inappropriate to Cronenberg's film. Patrick McGoochan, cast by Cronenberg as a guilt-sodden patriarch in **SCANNERS**, confronted matters not unrelated to the "frozen moment" in the final episode of his brilliant series *The Prisoner*. Cronenberg could benefit from consideration of the individual/ political knot as examined in that final hour alone - perhaps then he might really be ready for *Lunch*.



Bill gets the writing bug: NAKED LUNCH

THE HOMOSEXUAL ANGLE

NAKED LUNCH is the second instance of Cronenberg's deciding to omit or play down homosexual elements inherent to the source material of a film. The twin gynaecologists whose real-life case provided the impetus for **DEAD RINGERS** weren't quite as identical as Elliot and Beverly Mantle. One of them was homosexual. Although changing this detail rather conveniently simplifies the 'biology as destiny' thesis which Cronenberg uses to generate that film's philosophic dread, it matters only slightly. More problematic is his reluctance to draw from *The Naked Lunch's* tone of defiant flagrancy with regards to homosexual activity. Another side effect of Cronenberg's 'pulling back' from the page to include biographical portraiture of Burroughs himself is the shift in the Lee character to include Burroughs own doubts and self-hatreds on the subject of his orientation. One might detect a faint air of smugness when Cronenberg reads from letters published which show a man far from happy with being a 'faggot'. There can be no doubt that Burroughs came to terms with his sexuality later than one might have believed from the tone of the early novels. What is also certain, and again of more interest than simple biography, is that Burroughs's acceptance of his homosexual identity was facilitated by the brand of unrestrained sexual exploration he practised as a writer. It is therefore possible to argue that the 'real' Burroughs is to be found more in the text of his work than in the biographical miasma that surrounded him.

Despite this, Cronenberg's **NAKED LUNCH** is not fairly described as homophobic. The disfunctional aspect of the film's slant on the subject is due to the inevitable mismatch of Burroughs's and Cronenberg's sexuality. Lee is depicted as a bisexual who represses his homosexual side, the Martin character (who represents the poet Alan Ginsberg) is basically gay, but more or less neglected by the screenplay. Kiki is openly gay, comfortable with his sexuality, and exudes a positive energy unencumbered with doubt or guilt. When Kiki awakens in William Lee's bed, his demeanour is sensual, at ease with warmth and physicality, and Lee is shown responding to this when he kisses the boy's head. Later, Kiki's positive characterisation is emphasized when he takes Lee to the forge, where his smashed typewriter is 'mended'; transformed into the 'Mugwriter'. Lee informs the device that he feels "very comfortable" with it. It seems fair to interpret the forge scene, with its homoerotic figure of a muscular blacksmith,

lit by glowing coals, as representing the psychically healing, beneficial effects of facing and acting upon desire (in this instance, the homosexual kind).

It's only the figure of Yves Cloquet (based on Burroughs's close friend, the painter Brion Gysin) who might offend politically correct gay critics. Cloquet is petulant, very camp, effete, awed by Lee's show of verbal power ('the Duke's hemorrhoids' routine), aggressive towards the (weaker) boys he desires, and snobbishly obsessed with appearances. (If Ted Morgan's biography of Burroughs is to be believed, then this may contain at least some degree of accuracy). In the film's central depiction of gay sex, we see Cloquet metamorphosed into a huge centipede, sodomizing an agonized Kiki. Whilst it may be regrettable that no ecstatic depiction of sex between males is shown (and such scenes, whilst often aggressively described, occur frequently in Burroughs's work), there are certainly precedents for such a nasty coupling in the novel:

"...Tonight we make it all the way." "No, No!", screams the boy. "Yes Yes." [...] The boy crumples to his knees with a big "OOOOOOOOH", shitting and pissing in terror. He feels the shit warm between his thighs."

The scene climaxes with the boy's death by hanging, whilst he is fucked up the ass by a Mugwump. Although Burroughs describes the victim's death experience as ecstatic, "green sparks" and a "sweet toothache pain", with "spasms of delight [as] his whole body squeezes out through his cock", there is a clear sadistic relish in his description of the boy's terror. But whilst Burroughs will indulge such vicious fantasies, more often he describes sex between boys in a positive, highly charged manner, and his detailed evocations of orgasmic pleasure are shaded by nostalgia for boyhood energy (see *The Wild Boys* and its companion piece *Port Of Saints* especially).

Although Cloquet's sodomizing of Kiki is shown as exploitative and sadistic, it remains strangely distant and lacks any confrontational edge. The whole 'parrot-cage' sequence occupies a privileged position in the narrative, which suggests that Cronenberg intended for it to be an especially disturbing moment in the film; yet he presents the scene as an almost static tableau. There are scenes of sex and violence in Burroughs that cry out for the attentions of an aggressive film-maker, but Cronenberg fails to inject this key opportunity with any visceral or emotional punch. He has stated that he is relieved not to have attempted his adaptation earlier - I believe that in this too he is mistaken.

Since **VIDEODROME**, Cronenberg has tended ever more towards introspection ("morbid self-attention", as **TAXI DRIVER**'s Travis Bickle says), and his films are now characterised more by their despair and melancholia than the savage black humour that informed his 1970s work. **NAKED LUNCH** would have benefitted more from the attentions of a director fresh off the sets of **SHIVERS** and **RABID** than the claustrophobically miserable (though brilliant) **DEAD RINGERS**

CALLING DR. BENWAY

Burroughs's novel, in his own words, "*has dozens of characters, few of whom are developed beyond their initial appearance.*" Several of these characters turn up later in subsequent books. One character in *The Naked Lunch* could be said, however, to possess an importance far greater than most, although even he appears only sporadically; he is of course Dr Benway, probably Burroughs's most celebrated creation. Benway is "*a manipulator and co-ordinator of symbol systems, an expert on all phases of interrogation, brainwashing and control.*" ("*The Naked Lunch*" - p.30, Calder ed.). Significantly, in the novel he is given lines of monologue which issue verbatim elsewhere from the position of the authorial voice - Burroughs himself. Often, he functions as Burroughs' amoral twin, putting into practise schemes of authoritarian control which Burroughs delineates in his authorial voice but remains detached from. Burroughs's 'reports' are theoretical - but his creation within them, Benway, sends *his* after he has performed the acts described. Usually, he communicates in the form of anecdotal monologues, reminiscences of his hideous activities - the infamous 'Talking Asshole' sequence issues from Benway in the book. Cronenberg obviously recognizes the Burroughs/Benway relationship, because in his film it is 'William Lee' who recounts it on the way to Cloquet's house. Burroughs, despite his hyperbolic displays of gleeful obscenity, is a moralist, whose detached persona is projected from a position of outrage at the state of humanity. (It is worth recalling here Wyndham Lewis's admonition to appreciate the difference between a moralist and one who moralises). Burroughs, who bears in mind the argument that 'it takes one to know one', understands that the disease that besets Man - the desire to control and dominate others - is active in him too. Benway is a vision of his own potential for excess, cruelty, obsession with power; embodied in a charac-

ter and given free reign. The fact that the Benway persona is so often blackly hilarious in its outpourings is recognition of the dangerous allure of the role.

But Cronenberg's Benway is a curiously ineffectual creation. He appears only twice - the first encounter is promising, the second opaque and disappointing. The disappointment is compounded by Cronenberg's decision to use him as a climactic element, leading to expectations which the sketchy characterisation cannot match. The first encounter takes place in a late-afternoon G.P.'s office, the lighting dark but reassuringly quiet, 'civilised'. Benway's face is shadow and dark skin-tones. His manner is restrained, urbane, but his professional response to Lee's bug-powder problem is to introduce an even more addictive substance to him, under cover of a supposed cure. The script here is subtle, tinged with a sly wit. "*Side effects?*", inquires Lee. "*Mmm...nothing that will surprise the addict,*" Benway responds, with a smile. So far, so good. Benway's appearance at the end of the film, however, is more problematic. Emerging from the disguise of Fadela, the Frost's housekeeper and a lesbian witch, he is played by Roy Scheider as a cigar-chomping roué, displaying a hale and hearty air of conspiratorial bonhomie. Scheider manages to invest his brief turn with some inflections of derangement when he tells Lee that on their first meeting he saw in him the appearance of "*a sheep-killing dog*" (a description Burroughs claimed was levelled at him in his youth); Scheider's eyes take on an appropriately malignant set. But generally, Cronenberg appears uncertain of how to animate his Benway, whose passing insult describing Joan Frost as "*that purulent little cunt*" almost offends, strangely, due to its isolation from a context of excess.

Cronenberg has consistently refused to characterise any of his creations as truly Bad, certainly never Evil. Dr Emil Hobbes (**SHIVERS**) was insane but believed his work would benefit mankind, Dr Hal Raglan (**THE BROOD**) is a grey character, arrogant and overbearing but ultimately motivated to try and correct the errors he'd made, Darryl Revok (**SCANNERS**) is given an aspect of righteous vengeance. Perhaps only Barry Convex, the coldly menacing corporate manipulator of the 'Videodrome' signal is depicted as destructive, negative, without redeeming qualities. His gruesome cancerous demise is a rare indulgence for Cronenberg in the idea of 'just desserts'. Or maybe it's merely because Convex was never truly a real person at all, just a nightmare of Max Renn's damaged brain? But whilst

softening the Benway character might provide auteurist consistency, it unfortunately misses the point of even including him. Benway's character ought to be the repository of destructive whim, callous manipulation of others and all aspects of sexual negativity (the latter a front for power-obsession). When Lee accepts Benway's suggestion that Lee should file reports for him (the creator dominated by his creation) it should be a shattering realisation of 'the dangers of writing' Cronenberg's interviews have repeatedly alluded to. Instead the confrontation passes without incident.

WOMEN

Cronenberg's treatment of women has provoked controversy from feminist critics in the past. Here though, he seems to have been inspired against Burroughs's misogyny ("*Man cannot take Woman into space,*" as Uncle Bill exclaims) into imbuing definite strengths and attributes to Joan Lee/Frost to offset her biographically determined role of doomed victim. Joan is depicted as highly articulate and intellectually the equal of William Lee. Her drug habit is also self-determined, based on autonomous action away from the male protagonist. Hackles on the more touchy feminist necks may rise when Lee's 'case-worker' tells him that Joan was not human, but an agent of Elite Corp centipedes. But the bug-writer Clark Nova's assertion that women are "*a different species to men, with different needs and purposes on Earth*" need not offend feminist critics; indeed some might well agree. More dubious is the character Fadela, whose role is initially one of repressive, sexually disapproving menace. The scene in which she attacks the 'sex-blob' with a riding whip teeters precariously on the brink of unintentional comedy. Her lesbianism seems at first glance a highly troublesome element of the film, allied as it is to such an entirely negative character. A curious aspect of Burroughs's attitude to lesbians is that in *The Naked Lunch* they are drawn as power-seeking rivals to male control organisations, rather than a potentially destabilising threat to them. Homosexual sex is used by Burroughs as much for its socially antagonistic power as for celebrative Orgone-bathed purposes. Lesbianism, though less abrasively offensive to conservative minds, nonetheless insults the dominant Western social system too. (Or rather, both can ideally function as irritant and challenge to social power systems; though the 'gay scene' in reality contains high numbers of utterly frictionless drones, assimilable units whose sole desire is to be 'accepted'

by the straight world). Fadela's lesbian/witch configuration is a condensed male panic at the prospect of autonomous female power, plain and simple. To show her as a sexually repressive "*Bitch-queen*" (!) seems to suggest a Cronenberg almost looking for trouble. By an audacious (or perhaps desperate?) twist of the narrative, however, Cronenberg has Fadela exposed as a disguise for Benway. This would seem to imply that the dangerous-female-as-control-agent concept is merely a male construct.

CONCLUSION: GOING TO ANNEXIA?

It's ironic that the self-absorption and introverted fixation of **NAKED LUNCH** may have been caused, in no small way, by the conflicts in the Middle East last year (1991). Thanks to the Gulf War, Cronenberg's intention to shoot on location in Tangier was thwarted, necessitating a script re-write and a major re-think of the nature of 'Interzone', the film's principal setting. Instead of real locations housing hallucinatory/hallucinating characters, Cronenberg claims to have come to terms with Interzone as "*an hallucinatory state of mind*". Unfortunately for him, whilst the rest of us were transfixed by the world's first true Media War unfolding like some bleak electronic cancer, Cronenberg was stuck in Toronto re-writing his script so that it could be filmed on an entirely interior location. Of course, faced with such unforeseen and insurmountable trouble, his decision to move the project onto sets cannot be criticized. And yet the idea of how the film might have turned out had Cronenberg been able to go on location is tantalizing to say the least. How would he have coped with his first major foreign location shoot? (That's dismissing the short 'filler' items he made in France in the early 70s). As anyone who has been to Tangier will tell you, it's not a place conducive to melancholic introspection. The place assails you from the moment you arrive. It's a place of violent sensation, which allows you little chance to contemplate your navel; except for the sanctuary of a hotel room, where perhaps a writer (or film-maker) might find time to scribble down some of the maniacal energies generated by life outside. (I visited Tangier last December; for a couple of minutes, I tried to imagine how someone might go about directing a film there - I admit that I thought such a task could only be seriously contemplated by a lunatic! One thing is certain - **NAKED LUNCH** would have been almost unrecognisably different had it been filmed on location).

Cronenberg feels that he has improved steadily as a film-maker, and to an extent this is true. In his interviews however, one gets the impression that he is referring almost exclusively to the 'craft' of film-making. On this level, it is certainly true to say that **NAKED LUNCH** is a better film than his first commercial feature, **SHIVERS**. The quality of acting, camerawork and lighting, and the overall attention to detail in the script display a definite advancement. Such considerations are far from exclusively the sight of his films' worth, though. I've always felt that **RABID** was one of Cronenberg's best early films, and when one considers its kinetic drive, *outwards*, how refreshing it is in comparison to the finely honed but depressingly static **NAKED LUNCH**.

There's a moment in the film that captures what could have been, and it occurs as William Lee recounts his drop-dead party-piece, the 'talking asshole' routine. Lee is being driven, with Kiki in the back seat, to Cloquet's massive house by the dandified owner, who is driving his "*most wonderful car*", and listening in rapt adulation as Lee's cold, sardonic voice intones. As he talks of the plight of the brain who was trapped behind a sealed up mouth, the eyes filled with "*helpless suffering*", Cronenberg shows us shots through the car windows of the roadside flashing past. It's dark, and the headlights of Cloquet's car provide the only illumination by which we see the straggling line of a Moroccan caravan, occasional camels accompanying faceless jalaba-clad figures wrapped up against the cold of a North African night. Although presumably filmed in Canada, photography and camera-work give the sequence a *verité* atmosphere, a sense of people neither knowing nor caring about either the characters in the car, or better still, of the existence of David Cronenberg, William Burroughs or a film called **NAKED LUNCH**. They suggest the power that cinema can generate, which writing - for all its ability to render the flow of individual subjectivity - can never achieve. The power of the natural sign is uniquely that of the visual, particularly the moving, image. With it, 'Interzone' could have been much more than just a state of mind. With it, David Cronenberg could have escaped the solipsistic daze that threatens to overwhelm him as an artist. He jokes that a friend once came up to him after seeing **VIDEODROME** on its release, saying, "*You know, David, one of these days they're going to lock you up!*" In fact it's really no joke. The only problem is, Cronenberg is too busy locking himself up in his isolationist movies to see the danger.

Stephen Thrower

NECRONOMICON

aka **SUCCUBUS** / **NECRONOMICON - GETRÄUMTE SÜNDEN**

W. Germany/Spain, 1969

director: **Jess Franco**

screenplay: **Pier A. Caminnecki**

directors of photography: **Jorge Herrero, Franz Lederle**

editor: **Frizzi Schmidt**

music: **Jerry Van Rooyen, Friedrich Gulda**

producer: **Adrian Hoven**

cast: **Janine Reynaud** (Lorna Green), **Jack Taylor** (William), **Howard Vernon** (The Admiral), **Nathalie Nort** (Bella Olga), **Michel Lemoine** (Pierce), **Pier A. Caminnecki** (Hermann), **Adrian Hoven** (Ralph Dawes), **Américo Coimbra** (crucified actor), **Lina de Wolf**, **Eva Brauner**.

Lorna (Reynaud) is a nightclub entertainer whose S&M stage act comprises the simulated torture and murder of a chained man and woman. She is living with her manager/lover Bill (Taylor), but has visions/memories of a strange castle by the sea and a dark man who claims to have 'created' her. As the visions blur into reality, Lorna encounters The Admiral (Vernon), and after playing a word association game she murders him. Next day, at his funeral wake, she reacts with horror at the sight of the body. At a drunken gathering in a nightclub, a passing stranger refers to Lorna as 'Countess' and implores her to remember who she is. An LSD trip with Bill at a decadent party ends in chaos as the other guests turn into 'dogs' and pretend to eat her. Bill reacts violently when Lorna starts kissing another woman, and drags her away. Visits to a bullying psychiatrist (Hoven) trigger further visions but resolve nothing. Lorna 'visits' the castle of her visions and makes love with a young woman who becomes one of the clothes mannequins in the bedchamber - Lorna smashes the mannequin. Bill leaves for Berlin and Lorna follows. For a while, they seem to achieve a state of serenity and they make love. Afterwards, Bill goes to a rendezvous with Lorna's 'creator' - they arrange to shoot her after the completion of her next stage performance. Lorna's act climaxes with the actual murder of the two bound victims upon which she runs outside. As arranged, shots are fired and the soundtrack records her scream whilst inside the club Bill contemptuously surveys the two bound bodies.

Returning to his new apartment, he is confronted by Lorna, lying naked on his sofa. She demands that he kiss her and as he does so she pushes a long blade into the back of his neck and kills him. Her 'creator' drives her to the castle of her visions, which she enters...

NECRONOMICON is 'about' little that is tangible at all. Its ideas seem designed to spiral away, the script reducing words to free-associative games drawing on a horde of multiple references - to Godard and Hitchcock, Nietzsche and Hegel, Faulkner and Sade. Often, the patterns of reference appear arbitrary. Word association, though used in psychoanalysis to elucidate the subconscious, acts in **NECRONOMICON** to send the film trailing off in a series of elusive fragments, and there are times when Franco's tangle of obtusely assembled loose ends borders on the pretentious. What saves it from this state is its occasional sardonic parody of art cinema's 'search for meaning', as exemplified by directors like Godard and Fellini - and a skillfully evoked atmosphere of dreamlike morbidity.

Lorna's relationship with Bill is shown falling into arid dissolution, captured in an early exchange as Lorna attempts to interest her lover in sex. "*The Queen of dance - the stripper!*", she cries, gyrating provocatively - only to be shot down by his terse reply: "*Old fashioned and boring.*" Franco's recurrent dilemma is captured here - he's obsessed with the expression of sexuality, yet morbidly permeates it with the pessimistic twin of *ennui*. Even Lorna's unexplained flights of fancy (dreams? memories?) are suffused with an understated listlessness which contrives to be both sensual and melancholic. Embarking on a hallucinatory walk through Lisbon, Lorna encounters a lone figure whose mournful cries of "*Harps! Harps for sale! Second-hand harps...*" suggest the lapsed Catholic in Franco, cynical enough to have outgrown belief in heaven, but still dogged by fears of damnation. The latter is evident in Lorna's embodiment of desire, which is often entangled with guilty associations: "*I have done well, she is perfect - a disciple who mirrors my own image; the essence of Evil, a Devil on Earth*", intones the dark stranger who claims to be Lorna's 'creator'.

"*These Lisbon trolleys remind me of San Francisco...have I been there?*", Lorna muses, as she rides a tram climbing a beautiful Portuguese hillside. Caminnci's literate script subtly embodies the allusive style of the whole film, drawing alienated characters whose very experiences are displaced. Franco's images share this allusive quality, as

Lorna languidly rests her face on a mirror in reference to Cocteau's magical **ORPHEE**, or visits a party populated by jaded, acid-dropping sophisticates whose decadent antics are reminiscent of Fellini's **LA DOLCE VITA**. Most amusingly, Franco injects a scene where Bill quizzes Lorna about her identity, in the style of a Mickey Spillane novel, with an unmistakeable air of Godardian irony. The actors deliver their lines and gestures (a brief embrace for instance, which parodies romance between detective and female suspect) in the clipped, amused/detached fashion characteristic of Godard's early sixties films. This parody of a parody, and reference to a further reference may simply be homage, or it could imply a critique of 'art' cinema and 'Modern Art' in general, reliant as it often is on densely layered allusions to other Great Works. Franco's insistence on the ultimately arbitrary nature of these referential games is captured in the ironic enactment of the (cinema) psychoanalyst's favourite ritual; word-association...

Lorna hurries to a hazy appointment with a man called 'The Admiral' (Howard Vernon). "*Have you brought The Symbols?*", he asks dryly, holding out a top hat into which she drops a handful of (heavily echoed) pebbles. A kind of subdued seduction begins, as The Admiral gradually draws Lorna into his embrace whilst murmuring associative triggers... Tarzan, Godard, Faulkner, Henry Miller, Capote, Charlie Mingus, *The Story of 'O'*, Justine, Camus, 'the unconscious'; the latter eliciting Lorna's response of "*Marquis De Sade*", perhaps in deference to Sade's pre-empting of Freud. "*Religion*" from The Admiral provokes "*Gomorrha... Goethe... Sade... Gomorrha*" from Lorna, pointing forward to the movie's end where Lorna is renamed 'Faustine' by a valedictory voice-over which accompanies the final image. This condensation of 'Faust' and 'Justine', of profane seeker and abused innocent, into a single figure of desire may well be as far as Franco can go, at least here, towards finding peace with his own demons.

Elsewhere, a psychiatrist figure uses word association in a thrusting, aggressive manner, intimidating Lorna with rapid-fire demands; "*Birds... pachyderms... knives, pencils, bells, CANNON!*", he rants, a scene that shows 'the rapist' in 'therapist'! In a later session he tries to disorientate her (and the audience) by making obtuse, *non-sequitur* statements into camera: "*They have prohibited all neon signs*" and "*Marilyn Monroe was murdered*". When asked if she likes going to the movies, Lorna says "*They bore me*", but confesses that "*horror films are my weakness*". In a hilarious

scene, the analyst produces 'Aurora' glow-in-the-dark models of Dracula, The Phantom, Godzilla (referred to disparagingly as "*this dinosaur*") and Frankenstein's Monster, but Lorna dismisses them - "*They're all quite sweet.*" The mood changes when the analyst asks "*And what about this one here - the new one*" - the face of Lorna's 'creator' fills the screen...

NECRONOMICON's script is awash with cinematic references, though conspicuous by its absence is any mention of Alain Resnais's and Alain Robbe-Grillet's **LAST YEAR AT MARIENBAD**, a movie whose influence permeates throughout. However, other film-makers are directly invoked, in a conversation between Reynaud and Taylor whilst auditioning a noisy avant-garde performance 'artiste'. When Lorna says the act they're watching is outmoded, the two trade comments on Stockhausen ("*he's bad*"), Pop-Art ("*very, very bad!*") and the Rolling Stones ("*not bad...antiquated*") before Taylor dryly remarks: "*Films are outmoded, don't you agree? They're shown three months after they're made.*" Reynaud responds: "*Bunuel, Fritz Lang, Godard - they're not outmoded. Every time I see their films they seem new to me... they've got something...*". In light of this, it's no wonder that Lang is reported to have described **NECRONOMICON** as the first erotic film he had seen the whole way through because it was a beautiful piece of cinema!

NECRONOMICON never quite accomplishes the difficult task of rising above the network of namechecks and cultural signposting it weaves, but by imbuing all of its major characters with fundamentally ambiguous motivations it does afford scope for plentiful speculation. Whilst its elusive quality can sometimes become coy and irritating, this is, by and large, a beautiful and imaginative work which demonstrates Franco's cultural sophistication and scope, as well as his very sardonic sense of humour - parts of the film have a dry, ironic tone which goes unexpressed in his more mechanical efforts. I could do without the notion of Evil he uses, but Franco at least refuses religion any thematic priority, leaving all avenues of approach to this remarkably 'open' film equally unimpeded. Along with **VENUS IN FURS** this represents Franco on top form, a stylish film-making talent whose career can hold genuine surprises for the inquisitive fan of 'marginal' horror cinema.

Stephen Thrower

THE NIGHT EVELYN CAME OUT OF THE GRAVE
aka **LA NOTTE CHE EVELYN USCÌ DALLA TOMBA**
Italy, 1971

director: **Emilio P. Miraglia**
screenplay: **Fabio Pittoru, Massimo Felisatti, E. P. Miraglia**
director of photography: **Gastone di Giovanni**
editor: **Romeo Ciatti**
music: **Bruno Nicolai**
producer: **Antonio Sarno**

cast: **Anthony Steffen [Antonio de Teffé]** (Lord Alan Cunningham), **Erika Blanc** (Susan), **Marina Malfatti** (Gladys), **Rod Murdock** (George), **Giacomo Rossi-Stuart**, **Umberto Raho**, **Roberto Maldera**, **Joan C. Davies**, **Ettore Bevilacqua**, **Maria Teresa Tofano**.

This essentially wretched Spaghetti sex/horror yawnfest has a few acceptable exploitation elements but is largely made up of ridiculous people in hilarious clothes ranting and mumbling endlessly. Remember the high fashion standards set by Jean Brismée's **THE DEVIL'S NIGHTMARE**? Erika Blanc in her outlandish costumes? Well, there's plenty more where that came from, and much of it here...

This rubbish starts with a pre-credits 'escape from the loony-bin' sequence, with some wild hand-held camera and interesting psychotronic elements. Next we have a maniac picking up a cheap tart ('Polly' - ludicrous English accents abound...) and taking her back to his place. It's not long before they hit the torture chamber and he is just about to brand the bitch when he has a demented flashback to the delirious Evelyn romping naked in the garden in slow motion. Boredom exists for an eternity before our man picks up another hag (this time it's Blanc), has her put on kinky thigh boots (whew!), whips her and chases her around with a syringe. She's topless in hot-pants and those bloody awful boots. Alan, our 'hero', has a swinging party with the worst group ever playing. He marries a woman whom he meets there and weird things start to happen, all of them boring. A wheelchair bound semi-crone dies (very brief gore), is tossed into a cage of foxes (!) and is torn apart at excessive length. The scene takes place in more or less pitch darkness. That was Aunt Agatha, by the way...

Evelyn does finally rise from the grave, but it's all a con to drive Alan round the bend again. Who cares that

Things heat up for Gianni Garko in Giorgio Ferroni's NIGHT OF THE DEVILS.



there's some double and triple crossing going on? Blanc and Malfatti finally get down to a brief cat-fight, die, and it's up to Alan to save himself by throwing the bad guy (you don't care who he is, believe me!) into a swimming pool and tossing in a bag of 'Acidum Sulphorium' (honestly). The bad guy is dragged out by the police screaming "*I'm burning!*" Total garbage with zero fantasy element (unless you count Blanc, and you'd have to be pretty desperate to do so...) Torture dungeons were *de rigueur* at the time, but the whole mess has little to lift it above the dozens of similar films of the period. It's funny that as you get to see these 'legendary' titles, they all turn out to be abysmally boring and vastly over-rated by the few that saw them, stoned usually, on their initial releases...

Stefan Jaworzyn

NIGHT OF THE DEVILS

aka **LA NOTTE DEI DIAVOLI/LA NOCHE DE LOS DIABLOS**

Italy/Spain, 1972.

director: **Giorgio Ferroni**

screenplay: **Eduardo Manzanos Brochero, Romano Migliorini, Gianbattista Mussetto**

director of photography: **Manuel Berenguer**

editor: **Gianmaria Messeri**

music: **Giorgio Gaslini**

producers: **Luigi Mariani, Diego Alchimede**

cast: **Gianni Garko** (Nicola), **Agostina Belli** (Sdenka), **Mark Roberts** (Jovan), **Cinzia de Carolis** (Irina), **Teresa Gimpera**, **William Vanders** (Yorga Ciuvclak), **Umberto Raho** (Doctor Tosi), **Luis Suarez** (Vlado), **Stefano Oppedisano**, **Maria Monti** (the Witch).

Alexei Tolstoy's vampire story 'The Wurdalak' fares best as a segment of Mario Bava's **BLACK SABBATH** (1963), where its slow, moody structure is supported by the director's customary visual elegance, but here it fails to generate much excitement due to Ferroni's pedestrian direction. Whereas Ferroni's previous genre contribution, **MILL OF THE STONE WOMEN** (1960), exhibited plenty of visual flair and moved at a reasonable pace, **NIGHT OF**

THE DEVILS grinds to a halt when the main narrative begins. A pity, because the first ten minutes offer some obliquely assembled pleasures. A shot of a maggot-infested skull cuts suddenly to a woman's naked body being groped from offscreen, whilst gratuitous images depicting the removal of a person's heart and a woman's face being blasted off by a shotgun provoke our anticipation - so much so soon? It all makes very little sense, but Ferroni then leaves us to stew in his insipid narrative juice for about an hour, only heating up the proceedings in the last twenty minutes with the hero's escape from the vampires, when he throws in some refreshingly rapid cutting and plenty of manic grimacing from the peasant bloodsuckers, one of whom loses a fistful of fingers in a slammed car door

Gianni Garko, generally an unexpressive performer, plays a man who appears to have been driven insane by some terrible experience. He's held in a lunatic asylum and reacts hysterically when confronted by a mysterious woman (played by giallo regular Agostina Belli) who arrives to identify him. In a prolonged flashback we discover the cause of his behaviour - whilst driving through a particularly 'primitive' part of Yugoslavia, he encounters an inbred peasant family who tell him they are under attack from a vampiric spirit, or Wurdalak. He scoffs at their story, whilst becoming infatuated with the sultry elder daughter, whom we recognise as the visitor at the asylum. The dull lives of these bad-tempered yokels are in desperate need of relief, and the moment when the father succumbs to the Wurdalak provides a moment's excitement - an explicitly rendered staking takes place and papa's flesh rots in time-lapse fashion from his skull. Sad to say, a story with the potential to chill and enthrall only lurches into life when blood is spilled.

A few isolated moments escape the tedium: one atmospheric shot depicts oxen towing Garko's white sports car into the peasants' rundown farmyard. Just for a moment the juxtaposition of ancient and modern which structures the director's adaptation finds expression in an arresting visual image. Nevertheless, interested readers would be better advised to check out Ferroni's **MILL OF THE STONE WOMEN** for evidence of the talents sadly lacking in **NIGHT OF THE DEVILS**. (Ferroni died in 1981).

Stephen Thrower

NIGHT TRAIN MURDERSaka **L'ULTIMO TRENO DELLA NOTTE /****LATE NIGHT TRAINS / DON'T RIDE ON LATE NIGHT TRAINS**

Italy, 1975

director: **Aldo Lado**screenplay: **Roberto Infascelli, Renato Izzo, Aldo Lado, Ettore Sanzò**director of photography: **Gabor Pogany**editor: **Alberto Gallitti**music: **Ennio Morricone, Demis Roussos**producers: **Pino Buricchi, Paolo Infascelli**

cast: **Flavio Bucci** (thug), **Macha Meril** (the 'lady'), **Gianfranco de Grassi** (Curly), **Enrico Maria Salerno** (Giulio Stradi), **Franco Fabrizi** (Guard), **Marina Berti** (Laura Stradi), **Irene Miracle** (Margaret Hoffenbach), **Laura d'Angelo**, **Dalila Di Lazzaro** (Lisa Stradi), **Kay Beal**.

It's a common trait of the Italian film industry to take a popular American movie and churn out rough approximations of it, designed to tap into the lucrative market opened by its success. Quite often the resulting films are considerably more interesting than the models they borrow from. In this instance, Aldo Lado's amendments to the source material, namely Wes Craven's **LAST HOUSE ON THE LEFT**, are overtly critical of Craven's film, chiefly its use of class divisions to delineate the conflicts between characters.

It's Christmas Eve. As the credits roll we see two young thugs (Bucci and de Grassi) viciously mug a department store Santa, whilst on the soundtrack Demis Roussos of all people keeps anticipation at a bare minimum. At the station, two teenage girls (D'Angelo and Miracle) board a train to Italy, anxious to arrive back home for Christmas Day as arranged. Also boarding the train to evade the police are the two youths. An affluent, well-dressed middle-aged woman wearing a tasteful black-veiled hat (Meril) sits alone. During the journey, Meril enters the toilet compartment and is unable to prevent Bucci from suddenly forcing entry too. After a desultory objection, she engages in luridly passionate sex with the intruder. The two youths, with Meril observing, harass the passengers and briefly try to seduce the girls, who are first amused, then unnerved by their antics.

Later, when their train is delayed, the girls change to another at an isolated border station. It is dimly lit and appears virtually empty. For a while they are happy, believing they have left the thugs behind. They celebrate the arrival of Christmas Day with a small midnight dinner. Too late they realize that Bucci, de Grassi and Meril have also boarded the late-night train, and before they can look for help they are trapped in their compartment. Goaded and encouraged by the sadistic Meril, the youths humiliate, torture and rape both girls. D'Angelo, a virgin, is accidentally killed when the knife with which de Grassi deflowers her slips due to the sudden jerking of the train. Miracle tries to jump from the toilet window, hurling herself from the speeding train to her death on the rocks below.

The killers have stolen their victims' rail tickets and are forced by the eventual arrival of the guard to disembark next morning at the station where Miracle's parents (Salerno and Berti) are waiting. A rather contrived set of circumstances have the three sadists ending up at the parents' plush home, where the anxious couple's suspicions are confirmed by a news report announcing the discovery of the girls' bodies. The father attacks and kills de Grassi and Bucci. Meril saves her own skin at the last minute by persuading the parents that she was no more than a helpless onlooker held hostage by two maniacs. As the police arrive at the scene, she quietly stands back and pulls the black veil of her expensive hat over her downcast eyes.

As can be seen by the above synopsis, there are some important differences to **LAST HOUSE ON THE LEFT** which Lado has seen fit to introduce, above and beyond the obvious change of location. The chief failing of Craven's film is its concealed puritanism, despite its general sleaziness and occasional mild satire of the middle-class family. In **NIGHT TRAIN MURDERS**, the murder of the two girls takes place on a train as they hurry to get back in time for Christmas with their parents; the murders take place on Christmas Day. Craven's victims are abducted whilst trying to (tut tut!) score some grass on their way to a rock concert. Another point of contention is evident when comparing the final sequences. In both, the distraught parents wreak a prolonged and violent revenge against their daughter's murderers. At the end of **LAST HOUSE**, the exhausted couple are shown amidst the gore-streaked wreckage of their sitting room. They are

sickened by their actions, and the condemnatory presence of the police, having arrived just in time to shriek "For God's sake. Doc', no!" as the father finishes off the chief villain with a chainsaw, adds an unambiguous note of social censure to his revenge. The movie ends on a freeze-frame of the father's haggard face. In the equivalent scene in **NIGHT TRAIN MURDERS** the father is shown lifting a rifle to the killer's head and preparing to shoot. When his wife runs up to him and cries "*Hasn't there been enough violence?*", echoing Craven's argument, he pauses for a couple of seconds and reflects - then re-shoulders his gun and blasts the killer's brains out. The answer, delivered resoundingly, is 'Not yet!' A classically Italian response of course, revenge being one of their strong suits, but how much more honest and refreshing than the guilt-wracked liberalism of the American film!

It's pertinent to mention that the Craven film precedes its moralizing by showing the parents' complicated and ingenious revenge, involving a series of booby traps. These extended scenes use traditional means of generating suspense, and whip up the audience's thirst for the success of the parents' elaborate plan. To then snub this audience anticipation with such hypocritical moral wrist-slapping is clearly not on. Lado's film allows the enraged father his reason for killing his daughter's assailants, and allows the audience to share his satisfaction. Not exactly liberal of course, but at least it's not ashamed of itself.

More than anything else though, it's Macha Meril's character who really carries the film. She contributes an icily impressive performance which at times reminded me of the Sadean whores who serve as storytellers in Pasolini's **SALÒ; THE 120 DAYS OF SODOM**. She seems so adept at portraying the sleazy combination of elegance and sadism that it's difficult to believe that this is the same actress who appears from time to time in such up-market art-house films as Godard's **A MARRIED WOMAN**, Agnes Varda's **VAGABONDE** and Fassbinder's brilliant **CHINESE ROULETTE**. She is also at the centre of Lado's most interesting amendment to Craven. In **LAST HOUSE ON THE LEFT** there is a conscious, very deliberate class division between the psychotic killers and the hapless victims. Krug's band of reprobates include a child-molester, a lesbian (!) and a heroin addict, all of whom lack the niceties of 'decent' social behaviour. He himself is a loutish white-trash type, who was convicted for the crime

of slaying a priest and two nuns! The 'good guys' are a middle-class, middle-aged doctor (ex-services) and his wise-cracking drudge of a wife. When their daughter spurns the safety of the family circle and hangs around with 'bad' girl Phyllis Stone (poor family, petty criminal, sexually precocious) her fate is already sealed. Despite the ironies created by the role reversal through which the plot puts the two sides, the basic division is uncomplicated by any considerations of class prejudice. In Aldo Lado's simple but effective twist, the rapes and murders are committed by two 'lower class' types, but the presence and influence of Meril acts as catalyst to their excesses. Although she is clearly of high intelligence and income, her respectable appearance is a mask behind which a cold-hearted and vicious libertine lies. To make the point even more incisive, Meril's facade is enough to fool the vengeful parents into sparing her life - her well-bred manner and dress make her tearful protestations of innocence plausible to them. In the end, whilst the two louts are killed, she gets off scot-free.

It has to be said that despite being a more honest film than its model, **NIGHT TRAIN MURDERS** never achieves the raw power of the first half of Craven's infamous debut. Lacking the sub-cinema verité graininess and hard-edged performances that **LAST HOUSE** boasts, it adopts instead clear, lucid photography and carefully choreographed camera movement. Performances are prevented from achieving the realism one might have wished for by the inevitable distancing which dubbing creates and with the exception of Meril, no-one really stands out. As the more verbal of the two youths, Flavio Bucci (best known for his part as the blind pianist in Argento's **SUSPIRIA**) passes muster, but has to rely on his unusually warped face to carry off the part. The girls are particularly characterless, and a lot of the potential impact of the scenes depicting their torments is lost as a result.

On the other hand, a measure of eccentric colour is afforded by the array of bizarre fellow travellers on the first train. A carriage full of cheerfully drunken German pensioners bawling old army songs turn suddenly unpleasant when interrupted by Bucci, responding to his facetious Nazi salute with a mass "*Sieg Heil!*". Elsewhere, a withered old priest winks lasciviously at an uncomfortable young man opposite; another priest next to him leans forward and whispers that the old man merely has a nervous twitch. Nonetheless, the priest's continued

winking seems decidedly un-Christian. In both cases these incidental vignettes serve to further underline the theme of respectable appearances masking corruption and hypocrisy. And in terms of mood, the whole thing is aided considerably by the sparse but highly effective Ennio Morricone score, which revolves around an ominous harmonica refrain.

Lado's other movies are difficult to see. His excellent debut, **SHORT NIGHT OF THE GLASS DOLLS**, was reputed to have had a very brief early seventies release in the U.K. as **BUTTERFLY OF NIGHT** and almost equals the high standard of his 'video-nasty'. The degree of thoughtfulness he shows in his handling of the 'borrowed' material in **NIGHT TRAIN MURDERS** makes him essential viewing for anyone wishing to move beyond the Argento-Fulci-Bava triumvirate. (Note: Franco Prosperi's **TERROR**, an unofficial re-run of some of the film's themes starring Florinda Bolkan and Ray Lovelock, was released in 1978 but bears only fleeting similarities to Lado's movie.)

Stephen Thrower

NIGHTWATCH
aka **NATTEVAGTEN**
Denmark, 1994

writer/director: **Ole Bornedal**
director of photography: **Dan Lausten**
editor: **Camilla Skousen**
music: **Sort Sol, The Sandmen, Joachim Holbek**
producer: **Michael Obel**

cast: **Nikolaj Coster-Waldau** (Martin), **Sofie Gråbøl** (Kalinka), **Kim Bodnia** (Jens), **Lotte Andersen** (Lotte), **Ulf Pilgaard** (Inspector Wörmer), **Rikke Louise Andersson** (Joyce), **Stig Hoffmeyer** (Rolf), **Gyrd Løfqvist** (old Nightwatchman), **Niels Anders Thorn** (Doctor), **Leif Adolfsen** (theatre instructor).

With **NIGHTWATCH**, which topped the Danish box-office charts in March and April of 1994, director Ole Bornedal manages to overcome the limitations of the stalk-and-slash genre, at times resembling a Scandinavian Argento or Soavi. The *giallo* simile is not at all misplaced, as

NIGHTWATCH is definitely a European looking and sounding film, with good natured if heavy handed digs at crappy Hollywood clichés inserted into the script (*"if I were to say 'I love you', would it sound like bad movie dialogue?"* says the central character at one point), and it certainly looks impressive, with great camerawork and shock editing, the refusal to wallow in gore for gore's sake allowing for a more jolting use of violence when it does occur. The story itself is a good one; a young student, Martin (Waldau), takes on an evening job as a night-watchman at a local morgue to supplement his student grant, and becomes embroiled in decidedly sinister goings on involving peripatetic female corpses, kinky sex acts (including the post-mortem variety...), and the possibility that he is being set up to take the rap for a serial killer with a penchant for slicing up, and scalping, teenage whores... Yep, it's all good clean family fun! Once Martin and his best friend Jens (Bodnia) become involved in an ongoing, and increasingly risky, game of 'Truth or Dare', **NIGHTWATCH** kicks into gear, with a nicely judged restaurant blow-job gag adding some sleazy spice into the more routine slasher scenario. Things take a darker turn when Martin discovers that Jens has been telling the comely 16 year old junkie prostitute that he's been fucking that HE is called Martin. This role-swapping leads to the teenage harlot ringing up Martin's girlfriend's house and putting the cat amongst the pigeons, and Martin and Jens' friendship is sorely tested, as is Martin's relationship with his partner Kalinka (Gråbøl); when the prostitute is found murdered with traces of Martin's cum on her buttocks, suspicion understandably falls on the hapless student, with the apparently supportive Police Inspector Wörmer (Pilgaard), who has been collecting damning evidence (including a sperm sample...), implicating him as the killer...

Needless to say, all is not as it seems in **NIGHTWATCH** and the convoluted plot eventually unravels to reveal the true murderer's identity rather earlier than one would have expected, though this then adds a frisson to the final section of the film, with Martin frantically striving to save both himself and his girlfriend from the necrophiliac slasher... There is one really horrible (but not overly explicit) scene involving a character cutting his own thumb off in order to get out of a pair of hand-cuffs, and the young prostitute's demise is both grisly and sordid in equal measures, but **NIGHTWATCH** is a character and plot-led film more than anything else. The morgue locations make

for some really creepy moments, with the camera prowling down long corridors feebly illuminated by flickering lights, and the general tone of the film is sufficiently intense and morbid to please fans of intelligent horror, though splatter-pups will no doubt moan at the relative lack of spurting plasma; more fool them, eh? With a U.K. cinema and video release (courtesy of Metro-Tartan) in the bag, this is a downbeat classic well worth checking out.

Nigel Burrell

L'OCCHIO DIETRO LA PARETE

aka **VOYEUR PERVERS**

Italy, 1977

writer/director: **Giuliano Petrelli**

director of photography: **Cristiano Pogany**

editor: **Gian Maria Messeri**

music: **Pippo [Giuseppe] Caruso**

producers: **Enzo Gallo, Carlo Policreti**

cast: **John Phillip Law** (Arturo), **Fernando Rey** (Ivano), **José Quaglio** (Ottavio, the servant), **Olga Bisera** (Olga), **Joseph Jenkins** (Arturo's pick-up), **Roberto Posse** (Olga's brother), **John P. Dulaney** (Chuck), **Enzo Robutti, Mónica Zanchi**.

This slow but spicy tale of tragic perversity offers the viewer some unusual situations for an Italian thriller. A wealthy couple - the wheelchair-bound Ivano (Fernando Rey) and his libidinous wife Olga (Olga Bisera) - rent a nearby flat to a solitary man (John Philip Law) whom they spy upon using concealed cameras and microphones. The surveillance hardware is hidden in trendy abstract artworks dotted around the flat. They in turn are spied upon by their slimy servant (Quaglio), whose fetish for the lady of the house extends as far as pulling her pubes out of the plug-hole and sniffing them. All seems to be working out fine for the decadent couple until their peep show stud is seduced and buggered by a sexually voracious black guy (Jenkins, a well severe fuck to judge by Law's anguished screaming). Olga's simmering passion thus seems thwarted and she finds the spectacle too distressing to watch. Soon, though, she's embarking on a fully fledged seduction of her own and Law eventu-

ally gets it on with her too, watched by the tormented hubbie who's punishing himself for causing the death of Olga's previous lover in a jealous road-rage argument. Olga hides secrets of her own and their revelation changes what we thought we knew about the main characters...

With all this going on it seems barely relevant that Law is also meant to be some sort of sex murderer. We see him commit a gloatingly sleazy sex crime on a train during the credits sequence, but afterwards the director seems almost disinterested in following up the murder element, except to focus on the character's high intelligence, fascination with psychoanalysis and his taste for 'way out' rock music. An amusing scene in a bar has him spout pessimistic existential philosophy to the amorous Olga over drinks - she ignores his intellectual meanderings whilst mumsily picking lint off his jacket.

Although it's predictable that homosexuals in Italian thrillers should be suicidal, murderous or both, the film shows a pretty casual attitude to the characters' sexuality, and neither Ivano nor his disco-dancing pick-up are lumbered with the usual flapping wrists or screechy mannerisms. That said, the disco scenes feature some amazing 1970s kitsch and the prevailing tone is that of a barely suppressed camp soap-opera lurking behind sober pacing and camerawork. The film was shot by Cristiano Pogany who went on to shoot **MURDER OBSESSION**, Riccardo Freda's gloomy Oedipal swansong to the cinema.

Stephen Thrower

OPERA

aka **TERROR AT THE OPERA**

Italy, 1987

producer/director: **Dario Argento**

screenplay: **Dario Argento, Franco Ferrini**

director of photography: **Ronnie Taylor**

editor: **Franco Fraticelli**

music: **Brian and Roger Eno, Claudio Simonetti, Bill Wyman, Terry Taylor**. Operatic selections from **Verdi, Bellini, Puccini**

cast: **Cristina Marsillach** (Betty), **Ian Charleson** (Mark), **Urbano Barberini** (Inspector Alan Santini), **Daria**

Nicolodi (Myra, Betty's agent), **Francesca Cassola** (Alma), **Coralina Cataldi Cassoni** (Julia, wardrobe mistress), **Antonella Vitale** (Marion, Mark's lover), **William McNamara** (Stefan Obrini), **Barbara Cupisti** (Signora Albertini), **Antonio Juorio** (Baddini, theatre manager).

OPERA celebrates both Argento's reawakening of inspiration after the doldrums of **PHENOMENA**, and the defection of Vanessa Redgrave, with a virtuoso camera movement which takes her place as the *prima donna*. This also looks as much like a tribute to Fellini as **STARDUST MEMORIES** did, and indeed to the same Fellini film, **8-1/2**. Fellini and Woody Allen tend in these films to use the moving camera to represent themselves, but where is Argento's surrogate in **OPERA**? Is it the film director who is staging Verdi's *Macbeth* with ravens and a plane wreck, and who is characterised as a sadist ("*I always jerk off before I shoot a scene*")? If that seems unlikely (though it's worth remembering that **TENEBRAE** could be read as a confession of fears about the possible effects of horror fiction on some members of its audience), then perhaps the possibility is meant as a dark joke. Despite its extreme violence, **OPERA** is a playful film, not least in the way it scatters references for the initiated to appreciate.

Some of these are pretty obvious: the way the film turns the old plot of the understudy's chance of stardom into a nightmare, much as several of Stephen King's novels are shadowy versions of popular forms; and the echoes of the story of the Phantom of the Opera, though this phantom is disfigured only at the end (a fact the character seems almost to celebrate with his cry of "*Look at me - a monster*") and proves to have no interest at all in the opera itself or its performance. The opera, however, is significant, and not only because stage versions of the story are reputed to be cursed. Betty, the understudy who becomes the star, feels that the murders which surround her are somehow caused by her playing Lady Macbeth (which is to say, a woman who connives at and encourages murder) though she doesn't realise that another trigger is her wearing the costume her mother wore in the role. Intriguingly, she feels she's too young for the part, but it's pointed out to her that Verdi cast a seventeen-year-old (a somewhat sadistic act in itself, I'd say, since he required the soprano to have "*una voce aspra, soffocata, cupa*" which "*avesse del diabolico*" - a harsh, stifled, hollow voice with something devilish in it). Given its underlying theme of tortured family relationships

entangled in Italian opera, the film resembles a distorted version of Bertolucci's **LA LUNA**.

If **OPERA** has a problem, it surely won't be the odd loose ends as far as we admirers of Argento are concerned - for instance, the virtually trademarked images of running water, the sound of which is heard over several of the flashbacks. It's rather the curious lack of affect in some of Betty's scenes. Her intermittent slowness to react to the violence does make retrospective sense, especially if we take her protestations in the final moments - as the 'monster' is hauled away, leaving her splashed like Lady Macbeth with his victim's blood - to be deeply ambiguous; but Argento is taking quite a risk, rather as Michele Soavi's **STAGE FRIGHT** does in satirising its characters to the extent that the audience may not care about their fates. The violence, however, is so painful and disturbing that it seems unlikely that many audiences will be unmoved - above all, the images of Betty being forced to see. If the film isn't quite a **PSYCHO** or a **PEEPING TOM**, it shares their preoccupation with seeing as a theme and eyes as a recurring image (most wittily employed in the scene where Betty bathes her eyes). Perhaps it can be taken as Argento's tribute to them, as the scene with the wardrobe mistress and the scissors recalls the potato lorry scene in Hitchcock's **FRENZY** and Daria Nicolodi's spyhole scene quotes Peckinpah's style of editing. These may be tributes, but they certainly aren't plagiarisms; they couldn't be the work of anyone except Argento. Even he, however, has never previously achieved a shot quite as astonishing as the raven's view of its own flight.

I only hope that we will eventually have access to a complete print of the film - the version I've reviewed is the Australian, which is missing some of the narrative. Perhaps our censor will leave at least the theatrical print intact. Surely those fetishistic shots of instruments of bondage and violence aren't as dubious as the weapon-and-muscle fetishism of the Rambo films. Some of the excesses of **PHENOMENA** seemed dispiritingly mindless, but the excesses of **OPERA** are genuinely audacious - none more so than the shots of the throbbing brain, an image of nervous disorder that makes even Hitchcock's flushes of passion for **MARNIE** look restrained. I'm delighted to feel that he still has surprises and nightmares for us. Long may his brain throb.

Ramsey Campbell

PAGANINI
aka **KINSKI PAGANINI**
Italy/France, 1989

writer/director: **Klaus Kinski**
director of photography: **Pier Luigi Santi**
editor: **Klaus Kinski**
music: **Paganini** performed by **Salvatore Accardo**
producer: **Augusto Camanito**

cast: **Klaus Kinski** (Niccolo Paganini), **Debora Kinski** [**Deborah Caprioglio**] (Antonia Bianchi), **Nikolai Kinski** (Achille Paganini), **Dalila Di Lazzaro** (Helene von Feuerbach), **André Torrent** (Galvano), **Eva Grimaldi** (Marie Anna Elise Bonaparte), **Marcel Marceau** (Pantomime), **Donatella Rettore** (Miss Wells), **Bernard Blier** (Pater Caffarelli), **Fabio Carfora** (Mr. Watson).

Here's a real *film-maudit*. Allegedly planned as a twelve hour TV miniseries but taken away from its obsessive creator and released (marginally) as a 90 minute cut-down, it is the only directorial credit of Klaus Kinski, who clearly identified dangerously with its subject, the scandalous virtuoso Niccolò Paganini.

It was alleged - as alluded to in Luigi Cozzi's dire **PAGANINI HORROR**, which has a few shots of masked wanderers in Venice that are echoed here - that Paganini, like Robert Johnson, might have gained his superhuman skills through a deal with the Devil, and he remains the most famous musical performer of the pre-recording era. It seems likely that this diabolic rumour has as much to do with the maestro's messy, unpleasant personal life as his undoubted virtuosity. There was a trite 1947 biopic with a swaggering Stewart Granger, **THE MAGIC BOW**, and I'd assume that this got the green light on the grounds that the story might afford the opportunity for something on the scale of **AMADEUS**.

Though as jumbled and incoherent as its supposed trimming from twelve hours would suggest, **PAGANINI** also begs the question: if this was what the producers chose to put in, what must the stuff they left out have been like? Most heavily-pruned movies become plot-heavy and character-free, but this literally has no plot: apart from Paganini, none of the characters get properly introduced (we are left in the dark as to what their names are and, often, what their relationship with Paganini is) and the few biogra-

phical details that work their way in are delivered in anonymous voice-over comments from shadowy onlookers and audience substitutes. Though Kinski's Paganini is dead centre of the film, he has little to say - his violin-playing (dubbed by Salvatore Accardo) may be intended to be eloquent - and this is a pretty unshowy performance by Kinski's standards.

Most scenes involve a frenzied violin solo on the soundtrack, Kinski in a top hat and large black sideburns wandering about a picturesque Italian location, slightly slow-motion flashes of gambolling girls or trundling carriages, muttering spectators and glimpses of agonized sexual activity. The title sequence establishes Paganini's stage presence, as he saws away on the fiddle while women in the audience rub themselves through their dresses and men look on in disapproval, but we learn very little of his stage career. We don't even get much of his private life, though we see him arguing with a wife and dallying with a succession of under-age girls. Here, Kinski the director shows a great deal more enthusiasm than Kinski the actor, sometimes trying for a Borowczyk-like montage juxtaposing the sex with period fittings, camera movements and various clucking walk-ons.

Given the well-publicized falling-out Kinski had with producer Augusto Camanito, it's interesting that Camanito chose to leave in (if only via a voice-over) the verdict of a court-case brought against Paganini by a business partner who has gone bankrupt as a result of the maestro's refusal to live up to a performing contract (and who has allegedly been stalked by an assassin hired by the violinist). Otherwise there are just a succession of murky scenes. Paganini takes a violin from a begging child and delivers a spirited rendition of the German national anthem, contemptuously soliciting coins from awed passers-by; Paganini's son becomes a wilful brat and lives to see the violinist - who has been refused a grave in consecrated ground - buried in obscurity.

Having emerged as a screen presence under the influence of Werner Herzog and Jesús Franco, Kinski was obviously inclined towards the improvisational madman style of direction. However, in his attempt to make a period film using available light (which means candles), he was following the approach of that most controlled of all masters, Stanley Kubrick, in **BARRY LYNDON**. With his restless, hand-held camera and moments of close-up revelation - Paganini bleeding from the mouth as he performs a solo, tossing his dyed black curls to show a bald patch - the film

feels something like the work of Europe's most marginalized cinema genius, Peter Watkins (cf: **EDVARD MUNCH**). But, whatever potential there might have been in this project, or in the mass of footage presumably clipped out of it, there's little left on screen worth your attention.

Kim Newman

THE PASSENGER

aka **PROFESSIONE: REPORTER**

Italy, 1975

director: **Michelangelo Antonioni**

screenplay: **Peter Wollen, Mark Peploe, M. Antonioni**

director of photography: **Luciano Tovoli**

editor: **Michelangelo Antonioni, Franco Arcalli**

music: **Ivan Vidor**

producer: **Carlo Ponti**

cast: **Jack Nicholson** (David Locke/Robertson) **Marie Schneider** (the Girl) **Jenny Runacre** (Mrs Locke), **Ian Hendry** (a producer), **Chuck Mulvehill** (Robertson, the Dead Man), **Steven Berkoff** (Stephen), **Ambroise Bia** (Achebe), **José María Caffarel** (Hotel Keeper), **Manfred Spiess** (German Stranger), **Jean-Baptiste Tiemele** (Murderer).

ANTONIONI'S CINEMA

When Michelangelo Antonioni made **THE PASSENGER** his international reputation was already well established. He'd started out as a writer for the state film journal *Cinema* during WW2, then began making film documentaries in 1948. His first feature, **CRONACA DI UN AMORE** appeared in 1950 and he became associated with the post-war Italian Neorealists, Roberto Rossellini, Vittorio De Sica and Luchino Visconti. He was also at the vanguard of a new breed of critics turned directors, alongside French New Wave directors like Jean Luc Godard, Francois Truffaut and Claude Chabrol. Their innovative critical perspectives and heightened political awareness, combined with a willingness to experiment with new formalist techniques, changed the shape of cinema internationally.

After **IL GRIDO** (**THE OUTCRY**, 1957), an especially grim tale of a depressed worker unable to overcome the

trauma of lost love, he directed his most famous early work, **L'AVVENTURA** (1959), winning international critical acclaim. It's a stark, angst-ridden and desolate mystery story, beautifully shot in black and white, about the psychological and social conflicts of a group of people holidaying on a forbidding volcanic island. One of their number disappears inexplicably and the second half of the film depicts the less-than-strenuous efforts of her friends to locate her. At the end, the film's central enigma remains unresolved. **L'AVVENTURA** alienates yet also challenges in its depiction of existential hopelessness; a combination which recurs throughout Antonioni's subsequent films. His critical success continued with **LA NOTTE** (**THE NIGHT**, 1960) and **L'ECLISSE** (**THE ECLIPSE**, 1962); the first with its passionately alienated guests at a cocktail party, the latter charting alienated passions on the stock market.

Antonioni's first colour film **IL DESERTO ROSSO** (**THE RED DESERT**, 1964) was extraordinary, an alienation 'epic' concerning class conflict, the production process, relationships, gender, contradiction and compromise. The viewing audience and mode of production are symbolically and literally observed through the film's minimalist/formalist *mise-en-scène*, and the story's social microcosm. In the mid-sixties, a theoretical debate about the language of film was raging amongst politicised European directors and partisan critics. In particular, there developed a convoluted argument between Pasolini (developing his own semiology) and Godard (espousing Marxist Structuralism), each claiming to represent the real Marxist vanguard of the working class. Like Bertolucci and writer Umberto Eco, Antonioni claimed his allegiance with Godard's team. What these European protagonists shared was antipathy towards anything American (especially their once beloved mainstream Hollywood movies) and commitment to revolutionary Marxism (in varying guises). But American producers were no longer ignoring them and Antonioni (like Truffaut and Fellini) decided to give the enemy a go.

In 1966 Antonioni made his first film outside Italy - **BLOW UP**, with David Hemmings and Vanessa Redgrave. Produced by Carlo Ponti for MGM, it was carefully poised between European art film and POP-ular thriller, depicting cynicism and phenomenological despair against a backdrop of swinging-sixties London. Drawing on Hitchcock, **BLOW UP** stretches the genre it resides in, bringing to the fore one of the most furtive anxieties of the whodunit mystery, the

impossibility of reasoned deduction. A professional photographer captures a revealing moment - a murder? - in a photograph, but his passionate excitement degenerates into obsessive despair when he finds that the very gaze he thought had captured something 'real' is itself open to a vertiginous deconstruction, with truth just a psychological 'special effect' in a morass of interpretation. What's more, nobody cares anyway (truth and meaning drift into a relativistic quagmire of perspective and various third parties offer dispiriting commentaries). The truth can never be recovered, and in the end the photographer's futile crusade proves more (self) destructive than its cause.

When released, punters consumed Antonioni's alienation 'à la mode' like hot cakes and even mainstream critics whinnied for more. So it's not surprising that for his first Hollywood venture, this enigmatic director could demand a blockbuster budget from the greedy clutches of MGM, and maintain artistic control over the final product. **ZABRISKIE POINT** (1969) offers the barest minimum of plot (despite two story strands; a crude Marxist manifesto and, for Antonioni, an unusually rose-tinted romance). No expense is spared, especially on the literally explosive and apocalyptic ending. The trendy 60s soundtrack includes Pink Floyd, and there are oodles of meandering desert landscapes, this time the real thing, American style (Death Valley and Arizona). Technical qualities focus too deeply on deep focus, while occasional hand-held camera interruptions blur the location shoot into lavishly over-produced abstractions. When released, it bombed at the box-office (almost bankrupting MGM) and was savaged by critics internationally, becoming a textbook example of why big film studios should never relinquish control to arty directors. It's not vintage Antonioni, but thankfully it wasn't his last.

Never a prolific director, it was six years before he embarked on another cinematic journey. But it was definitely worth the wait. Antonioni chose Peter Wollen as script collaborator, a fact which commentators on **THE PASSENGER** often fail to give the significance it deserves. Peter Wollen was one of Britain's most influential and controversial film theorists, but is now somewhat unfashionable. He was among the first exponents of the auteur theory in the UK and a seminal writer for *Movie* magazine. However he soon realised the auteur approach was inadequate: it failed to allow a good director to make a bad film, and attributed directors (particularly those working for Hollywood studios) with too much power over the produc-

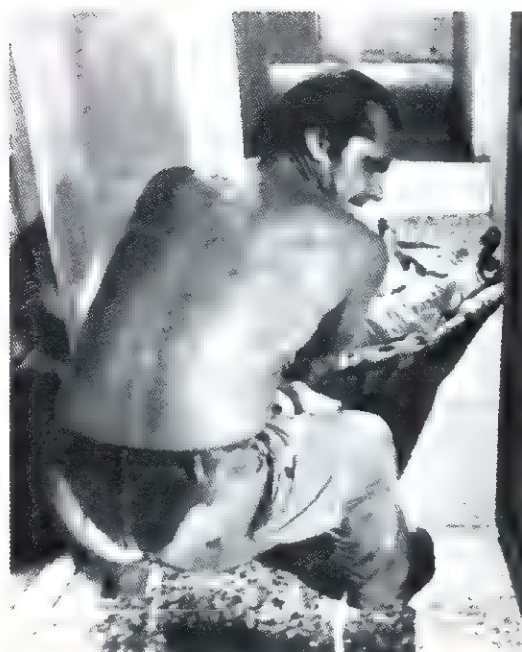
tion process. So Wollen changed his position, developing ideas on the semiology of cinema (in particular adopting C.S. Peirce's sign system and Roland Barthes's notion of the natural sign). This compromised the director to a catalyst in a system of production. But Wollen also recognised problems in dogmatically pursuing structuralism, so offered 'auteur-structuralism'. This eclectic approach creates new problems, privileging the critic as the seeker of truth and meaning and enshrining him/her as final interpreter. But Wollen deserves reconsideration because his approach does account for the viewer's ability to seek and find specific themes through familiarity with a body of work. Wollen was also an experimental filmmaker, best known for his short film cycle **THE RIDDLES OF THE SPHINX**, directed jointly with Laura Mulvey (another prominent film theorist). Since **THE PASSENGER**, Wollen has continued to write provocative essays on Third World and avant-garde cinema, and direct low-budget, political films like **CRYSTAL GAZING**.

THE STORY

THE PASSENGER begins with so little fanfare you feel a traveller's sweet disorientation, as if waking after a vehicle has set off. We see the desert, a man, and a landrover stuck in the sand. Sunlight beats down on lifeless dunes. The man is a reporter whose job has ostensibly led him here in search of information about rebel guerilla activity against an African state. However, despite the near total absence of dialogue we soon sense that he has arrived at this scorched-earth environment with something other than professional zeal. More precisely, it's what he appears to be without that attracts our attention. There is no curiosity, no guile, no passion, or even cynicism in his face. His demeanor is flattened out like the landscape and the colour palette of the images, which stonewall the eye with flat, unvaried, contrastless earth hues.

"No desire. The desert." - Jean Baudrillard, *America*.

The man is called David Locke, and he's played by a very good actor called Jack Nicholson whom you may recall from **FIVE EASY PIECES** and **THE KING OF MARVIN GARDENS**, two powerful and moody Bob Rafelson films. Following on from these excellent performances, Nicholson's Locke is a man at the end of the line. There's something depleted and inertial about him, as if he's stopped caring about anything at all, never mind his



this page and opposite rare promotional shots from THE PASSENGER





supposed job. The impartial observer who's lost faith in observation, he's now impartial to everything.

"The only certain thing was my need to reduce suspense to a minimum, even though there had to be some left - and I do think some has been left, even if it is an indirect, mediated element. It would have been very easy to make a thriller. I had the pursuers and the pursued; nothing was missing, but it would have been banal. That wasn't what interested me" - Antonioni.

Why was Antonioni so unwilling to approach the subject matter dramatically? For some viewers, this question is likely to be phrased with exasperation. The narrative will explain Locke's backstory later, through flashbacks and cutaways, stirred to some semblance of conventional plotting by the nagging demands of genre: but the initial scenes hold true. They have an absence of dramatic colour as striking and disquieting as the absence of primary colour in the frame. The decision to begin a story at such an opaque point is a clue to the lead character's existential predicament, as well as an indicator of Antonioni's unwillingness to play the game of cumulative revelation which defines the thriller form. Instead he creates a film which moves from near-suicidal blankness, through the adventure of life, to a blissful absence of self and identity: like a depressive's life lived backwards. Bracketed by despair and oblivion, the mechanisms of the 'story' feel, if not quite arbitrary, then certainly fanciful, as if the journey between life and death is an interchangeable display of costumery. Locke dresses up as a 'revolutionary', assuming the role of a gun-runner occupied in the nitty gritty of political conflict, a romance often fetishized by would-be Marxist revolutionaries on college campuses post-1968. **THE PASSENGER** feels like a disillusionment-film where, paradoxically, the lost illusion is denied the power of an imperative. Instead of a mourning for lost meaning, there's a fateful admission of the absence of even a significant absence.

"Why are the deserts so fascinating? It is because you are delivered from all depth there - a brilliant, mobile, superficial neutrality, a challenge to meaning and profundity, a challenge to nature and culture, an outer hyperspace, with no origin, no reference points." - Jean Baudrillard, *America*.

THE PASSENGER is predominately visual storytelling, with minimal dialogue, evoking the natural sign to its full potential. After the opening images simultaneously encapsulate and estrange you in a barren, desert landscape, the location shifts to a nondescript village with a rudimentary hotel. Natural sounds interpolate the silence, every-

thing looks like a documentary. The landscape is indifferent to the people. Locke fumbles around in his parked jeep, standing out like a sore thumb in his European attire, clearly alien, making the locals uneasy by his presence. Absorbed in his tasks, he's unaware of the discomfort he's arousing. His first line of dialogue comes several minutes into film: *"Do you speak English? Parlez-vous anglais?"* There are snippets of broken conversation in encounters with locals, none of whom communicate very much in English. Locke speaks even less of their language, exchanges are accompanied by lots of facial expressions, gesticulations and misunderstandings. None the wiser, Locke and his guide drive back into the desert. Suddenly, having left the jeep on foot, the guide appears scared and motions Locke to duck behind some rocks. In the distance is a group of nomads riding across the landscape. The guide sneaks off, leaving Locke, bemused, hiding on the precipice. He drives back but his jeep gets stuck in a sand dune. He climbs out, grimaces, laughs, frowns, groans, finally attacking the indifferent vehicle.

"My films are always works of searching. I don't consider myself a director who has already mastered his profession, but one who is continuing his search and studying his contemporaries. I'm looking (perhaps in every film) for the traces of feeling in men. My work is like digging, it's archaeological research among the arid material of our times." Interview with *Esquire* (August 1970)

Staying for a couple of days at a tiny hotel on the desert's edge, Locke encounters another traveller, Robertson, and the two men share a couple of drinks and a conversation. Later, Locke enters Robertson's room and discovers the man has died, apparently of a heart attack. Sliding up against the body, Locke stares intensely into the face of death. As if in a dream, he mooches around the room, inspecting the debris of a life. Munich Box 58, ticket, passport, gun. We hear his recollections of their previous conversation, some of which we recognise, some of which is new. *"You seem unusually poetic for a businessman"*. *"I prefer men to landscapes"*. *"Some men live in deserts"*. Elliptical editing starts to change the emphasis of the film, flashes forward and back, temporal discontinuity and disruption; *"We transfer everything into our own code"*. Noticing a vague similarity in their appearances, Locke decides to swap identities with the dead man, switching passport photos and assuming Robertson's identity. He leaves the disinterested African hotel staff to discover that 'Mr Locke' has died in his room. Moving on, he follows Robertson's schedule as planned out in his diary, discovering in the process that he

has now 'become' an international arms smuggler, gaining a new life fraught with dangers. Meanwhile, his wife and associates have grown suspicious about the circumstances of his 'death' and set about discovering the truth, a course of action which threatens to bring 'Robertson' face to face with his unwanted past.

"I believe I've managed to strip myself bare, to liberate myself from the many unnecessary formal techniques that were so common at the time. So I've rid myself of much useless technical baggage, eliminating all the logical transitions, all those connective links between sequences where one sequence served as a springboard for the one that followed. It's important for cinema to turn toward ways of expression that are absolutely free, as free as painting which has reached abstraction; perhaps cinema will even construct poetry." - Antonioni, *Bianco e Nero* (February 1961)

David Locke is a news reporter and documentary filmmaker, on a mission to get a story - a seeker of truth, observer, a spy on the actions of others, a voyeur, a viewer. It later transpires that he's established and respected in his field, but past his peak; married to an English wife (Jenny Runacre), settled in London, an adopted child, comfortably well off. But the couple have become estranged from each other. He has built his reputation on gaining interviews with tin-pot dictators and self-proclaimed rebel leaders in remote, civil war-torn African banana republics. He's cynical and pragmatic in his detachment, objectifies everyone. Further, he seems unhappy, dissatisfied with his life and achievements, bored and frustrated. All this information comes sparingly, bits in a jigsaw. The viewer must piece together the signs; become a seeker of truth and meaning in an alien landscape.

"I've been waiting for someone who hasn't arrived." On a Barcelona park bench, Locke converses in Spanish with an old peasant; the scene recalls Edward Albee's short, Absurdist play, *The Zoo Story*. There then follows genuine archive footage of violent executions, a juxtaposition suggesting the Spanish Civil War, which the loquacious pensioner must have survived (the footage is actually of military executions in Nigeria, tying victims to oil drums and machine gunning them). The effect of this unexpected confrontation with reality is disturbing; but a lull in proceedings allows you to settle. Just when you think the worst is over there's a loud machine gun crackle and a victim's struggle for life stops. The shot lingers in the mind as the image on the screen drifts off. We're 'with' Locke's wife and his producer, watching the Nigerian footage.

"Naturally I am interested in politics in my own way, not as a professional politician, but as a film-maker. I try to make my own little revolutions with my films..." - Antonioni

THE PASSENGER flits around between North Africa, Germany, Barcelona and London, shifting in space whilst also ricocheting around in time, via several flashbacks to Locke's life before he assumed Robertson's identity. The main character is thus uprooted from his habitual way of life: the movement from country to country generates a rootless dynamic in the story. For a while, the open road becomes the visual motif for the film, as Locke/Robertson engages with a female companion un-named in the narrative and referred to as 'The Woman' in the credits. Recollections of Godard's **PIERROT LE FOU** arise, perhaps along with some of that film's existential romance. Antonioni films from their open-topped car as it drives down a tree-lined country road, with the camera mounted high up in the rear surveying the road behind, the height giving a sense of liberation and exhilaration, the rear view a sort of ecstatic pessimism. Whether their previous near meetings in exotic cities around the globe are mere coincidences, synchronicity, or whether she is an obsessed stalker tracking her prey, is a futile consideration. By the end of the film, her enigmatic and mischievous demeanour even allows the possibility that she's in the employ of Robertson's enemies, and has betrayed him (recalling Godard's **A BOUT DE SOUFFLE** and again **PIERROT LE FOU**). It's unlikely that such enigmas, which proliferate throughout the film, are accidental; the point being that, as in real life, obsessively seeking the underlying truth of everything is an endless and pointless effort. What we have are glimpses of truth through action, one's objective mediation with the world and others. Nietzsche says, *"In danger all that counts is going forward, by growing used to danger, man can allow it to become a part of him."* In existential philosophy, there is no soul to fall back on as symbolic repository of self, nothing behind the words and deeds. There's only one way to go - forward, action in the world. To act is to become an agent who is then identified through his choices, defined by his actions. But Antonioni, an atheist obsessed with his spiritual void, sees no lasting deliverance through action and engagement - changing from observer to man of action entails a change of clothes but all ends the same in death.

Civilization is constructed through violence. So-called advanced cultures create a cosy, surface veneer, which merely conceals the inherent, underlying violence. By creat-

ing his own rules outside of what is permitted, Locke's subterfuge exposes the fragile matrix of lies and masks that sustain the status quo. He is therefore a threat to that order. This clearly puts him at risk, but this danger, either from the unknown or the glimpses of violence it reveals, is crucial to intensify the excitement of his existential predicament. However, a man alone cannot maintain this intensity; it is punctuated by boredom and impending psychosis. Man is essentially a social creature and needs others to objectively acknowledge his actions. Locke is returning to a new life from the edge of death (we sense that the switch with Robertson provided a respite from the act of suicide). And yet as soon as the game is resumed, the same pressures and limits and problems start to assert themselves. He finds it increasingly difficult to remove himself from his past. It seems that Locke's relationship with his wife contributed to his disaffection, and yet as soon as he has established a new identity for himself he falls in with another young woman whose companionship he begins to rely on. Having taken on another identity, the self still needs a significant other to provide an index of its reality.

Whatever - 'The Woman' and Locke click. She's carefree and he can use her help. Locke's wife and his producer have tracked down 'Mr Robertson' to his Barcelona hotel and are waiting to speak to him about Locke's death. Locke narrowly escapes unseen; he needs a stranger to collect the baggage from his room and here she is. Having passed this intuition, they're soon shackled-up together, partners in crime and outrunning the cops in a car chase. They're both very passive in the arrangement; you might even wonder whether she's his alter-ego. But they drift along together like buddies, each cautiously controlling their emotional attachment to the other, allowing each other space free of restrictions and expectations. She is a refreshingly unconventional female character. Antonioni's films are crammed-full of characters whose passionate and emotional expressions are deeply repressed through processes of social alienation. Usually there's a negative take on this, the character armour suffocating communication. But with 'The Woman', her apparent naivety and mischievousness is seductive, giving her emotional detachment a positively liberating, affirmative quality. She exudes sensuality and androgyny, as exhibited in her previous role opposite Marlon Brando in Bertolucci's **LAST TANGO IN PARIS**. Her wayward waifishness is soothing to Locke's condition, as he steps into a dead man's shoes. At times

she's like a runaway child, and their relationship has the feel of strays who form an allegiance on the road. The companionship offered and the physicality of Schneider's presence - at times she's more like a teenage boy in a dress - is suffused with the romantic companionship of youth at large against the despised adult world. Indeed there's something adolescent, juvenile, about the whole fantasy the film sets in motion - swapping identities with such ease, becoming a gun-runner, meeting a side-kick and partner in subterfuge, going on the road together - it's like an intellectual's daydream of an espionage thriller.

"One of the themes of the film is to examine the myth of objectivity. I never think in terms of this kind of conflict: between the individual and the mass. I'm not a sociologist. I never make a political thesis. I would prefer it if something like this comes out of it. If I put a character against a landscape, there is naturally a relationship." - Michelangelo Antonioni

The real star, in this as in other Antonioni films, is space. As Sun-Ra said, "Space is the Place".... Everyone present seems also absent, somehow other. Even the Director is marked by absence, trying to escape interpretation by others, refusing to 'play the game' (and *a-priori* just a cog in the production process). Style and meaning in film are always intertwined - or more precisely, style *is* meaning. In Antonioni's films, style is as much a series of co-ordinated absences as it is an issue of presence. Much can be gleaned from the film by reference to what is missing. It's through the careful opening of certain spaces that Antonioni establishes a vivid field of presence, a paradoxical sleight of mind to let reality happen by stealth (like Magritte's image of a man seeing the back of his head in a mirror). There is throughout the film a near-total refusal of film music, which plays particularly strongly today, in a film culture saturated by music to an hysterical degree. The dismissal of music clears the way for environmental sensations to predominate: the sound of the wind and the noises made by Locke as he trudges towards the nearest settlement allow the audience to tune in towards a presence within the frame, rather than prematurely towards the artist and his devices. Although the absence of music is a device, it's one that 'stands aside'. The connection between sound and image is one of the strongest indices of 'realism' in a film. Even pornography, where the events depicted have as their aim the effacement of artfulness and the worship of the real, can be divided into greater or lesser degrees of success by their use or refusal of music, live sound, real-time as opposed to dubbed groans

etc. It's this fusion of two fields of information - sound and vision - that suggests reality to us so much more than the simply pictorial representation of photography or painting (which developed into a plastic, non-representational medium when photography and cinema arrived). However, Antonioni never simply relies on sound to connote the real. The film constantly deals with the difficulties of presenting representations of the real world through the conventions and contrivances of cinema, a concern which can be felt in earlier films like **BLOW-UP** and **L'AVVENTURA**.

"Things emerge that we probably don't see with the naked eye. I always distrust what I see because I imagine what lies beyond it. And that there is an image beyond this which we don't know. But it so happens, by enlarging too far, the object itself decomposes and disappears. Hence there's a moment in which we grasp reality, but then the moment passes." - Antonioni on **BLOW UP**

Before their final pre-arranged meeting, the representatives of the revolutionary army who are buying Robertson's guns have tumbled to the subterfuge. Now they're after him. His wife has received Locke's forged passport. She is also determined to catch up with the elusive passenger. Try as you will to escape your past, sooner or later it catches up. As the protagonists head towards a desolate meeting point, Locke has last minute doubts, knowing he will not walk away. But he's living on borrowed time and cannot alter his destiny.

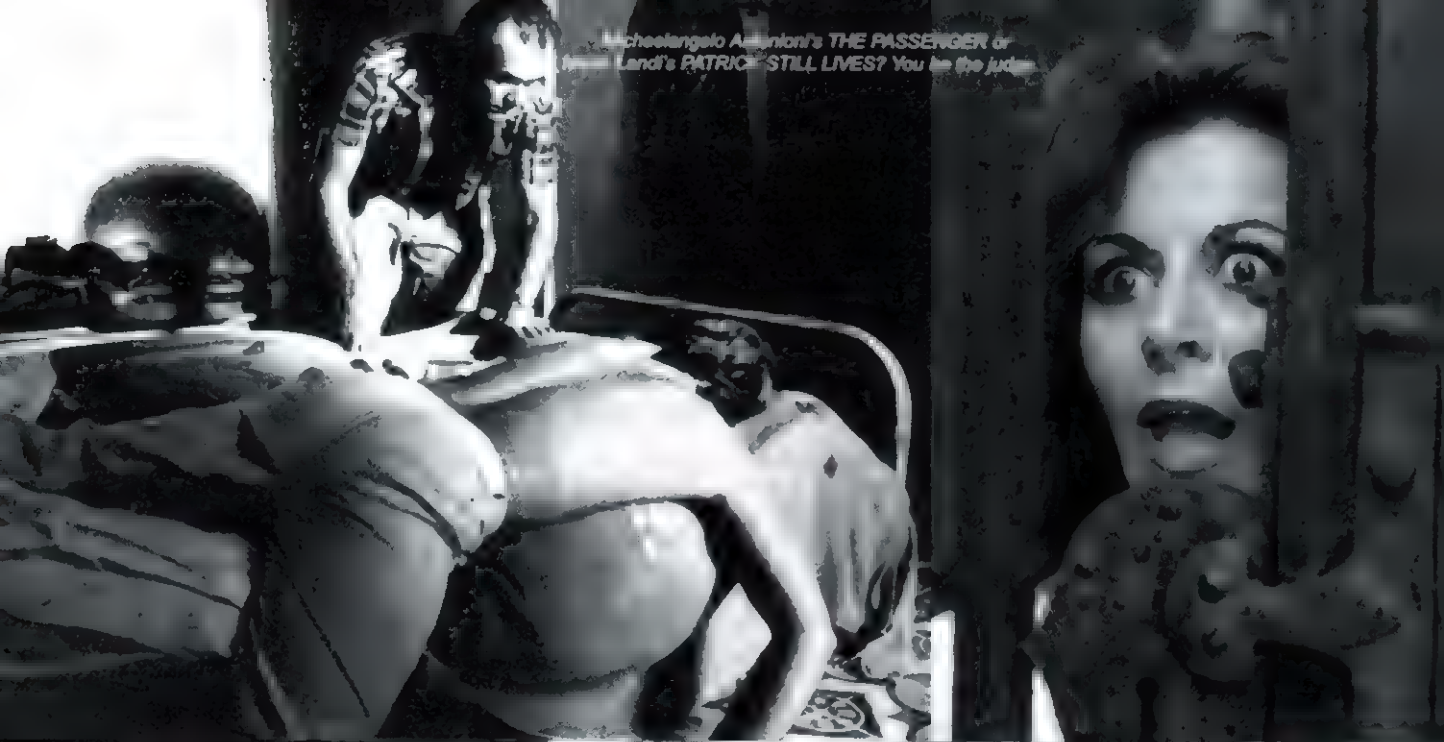
The last two shots, the first of which lasts seven minutes onscreen (and took eleven days to film) bring **THE PASSENGER** to a unique, disturbing and haunting conclusion that lingers in the mind for days afterwards. It ranks as one of the most beautiful passages of cinema ever created, on a par with scenes such as Scotty's trailing of Madeleine in **VERTIGO**, or the dream memories of the man sleeping by the stream in Tarkovsky's **STALKER** (both wordless sequences of great duration and sustained beauty). Locke, having arrived in a dusty peasant village, lays on a bed, alone in a simple, brightly sunlit hotel room. The unglazed, decoratively iron-barred window offers a view of a parched rural village plaza. What follows is one very long and uninterrupted take, as the camera embarks on an almost imperceptible track and zoom, leaving Locke behind on the bed and concentrating on the window, advancing slowly until the man has disappeared out of frame and then passing through the bars, smoothly and with a mesmeriz-

ing gentleness leaving the room and its occupant. Outside, various distant figures wander past, children play, 'the Woman' wanders distractedly. A car pulls into the plaza and two men get out. One has an obscure altercation with 'The Woman', whilst the other exits the film frame en-route to the hotel room 'we' (that is, we via the camera) are leaving. But Antonioni keeps the 'action' in long shot. Enmeshed in the location, the characters and their relationships are shown to us without the close-ups or manipulative editing that would define a conventional movie climax. Soon after, the man reappears, he and his sidekick get back in the car and drive off. Within a few seconds, Locke's wife and the police pull into the plaza, and head for Locke's room. The camera turns around in the square (a dizzying moment as you realise the full extent of the tracking shot as opposed to the zoom) and heads back to peer through the window to show us Locke lying dead on the bed. Although a few sounds we've heard suggest that someone entered Locke's room, they were too inscrutable to indicate the nature of his death. Suicide? The possibility is left open. Murdered while asleep? We cannot say.

Antonioni is trying out a version of death here. There's usually some trepidation as we consider our own death, that great leveller, the ultimate plot device. Our enjoyments, our anxieties, our doubts and ventures, our nightmares and daydreams, all these aspects of awareness have cast before them a great foreboding, a shadow - beyond the moment lies death, nothingness. In fact the greatest moments of awareness always deepen the shadow of death as surely as they amplify our sense of presence. But is the idea of our non-existence before birth as terrifying as our non-existence after death? The answer is no - yet the void precedes as well as succeeds us

"We are surrounded by a reality which is not defined or corporeal. Inside of us, things appear like dots of light on backgrounds of fog and shadow. Our concrete reality has a ghostly, abstract quality." Antonioni's Introduction to *Four Screenplays* (published 1964)

There can be pleasure in contemplating this non-being, as long as it's devoid of the melodrama of dying. Antonioni's camera goes out the window and summarily rejects the drama of the moment of death. The line is crossed somewhere behind the camera's eye, we don't know where or when. When the camera returns, it's all over. The final beauty of what we've seen in **THE PASSENGER** is its inconsequentiality. A man has died, people who cared have



come and gone, dust has been stirred and then settled. Light, which has irradiated every shot of the film so far, diminishes. Night falls. In the country dusk, sounds echo across open spaces; shadows gather on sandy ground, there are doorways half-open beyond which people go about their evening tasks; the miniscule enormities of life continue, insignificant and sublime. Locke/Robertson? What does it matter? The question is ecstatic. Beyond the ego and its extinction lies the world, free of you, free of me, free of the burden of being an 'other' to someone or other once known as you, or me.

No other art form does it quite so well: the power of the cinema to merge death (absence) and presence. Lumière's workers - all dead. Eisenstein's soldiers, Greta Garbo, James Dean, Orson Welles, River Phoenix, Jack Nance - all dead, dead, dead... Cinema is 'part graveyard, part time machine. Presence is a sardonic aside for the movies, a sloughed skin. Despite the lights and drama and paraphernalia, fragments of time and lived experience emerge, the fantastical and quotidian combined. There's always something that escapes the intentions and designs of the film-makers. Those who oppose the auteur theory protest too much, so keen to elevate the writer, the designer, the DP, the talented assistant, hell, even the reader and especially the critic. What really rides sovereign through cinema is the accident of reality: a stray, delinquent reality oscillating between death and life, sublime glimpses of a fleeting, insidious presence.

"I try to highlight certain problems and contradictions, to bring out certain emotions in the audience, to have them experience certain things rather than others. Sometimes it happens that the films are interpreted differently from the way the director intended, but perhaps this isn't important. Perhaps it doesn't matter whether films are understood or rationalized; it's enough that they are lived as a direct personal experience." - Antonioni.

"Drifting into my solitude/Over my head/ Don't you wonder sometimes/About sound and vision?" - David Bowie, *Sound and Vision*

"My only regret is that I wasn't born someone else." - Woody Allen

Chris Barber and Stephen Thrower

PATRICK STILL LIVES
aka **PATRICK VIVE ANCORA** /
PATRICK IS STILL ALIVE / **PATRICK 2**
Italy, 1980

director: **Mario Landi**
screenplay: **Piero Regnoli**
director of photography: **Franco Villa**
editor: **Mario Salvatori**
music: **Berto Pisano**
producer: **Gabriele Crisanti**

cast: **Sacha Pitoëff** (Doctor Nash/Herschell), **Gianni Dei** (Patrick), **Mariangela Giordano** (Stella Suniak), **Carmen Russo** (Cheryl Kraft), **Paolo Giusti** (David Davis), **Anna Veneziano** (Lydia Grant), **Franco Silva** (Lyndon Kraft), **John Bénédy** (Peter Suniak).

Rendered comatose when he is hit by a bottle thrown from a passing car, Patrick Nash (Dei) is kept under observation in a special ward at his father's exclusive country clinic. Guests at the clinic begin to witness inexplicable events; and soon, apparently affected by the psychic vibrations of past crimes committed there, Patrick uses telekinetic powers to engineer a series of violent deaths. The chaotic finale of the picture sees Doctor Nash (Pitoëff) attack Patrick's girlfriend, only to die when his son causes him to suffer a heart attack...

As can be expected, ex-TV director Landi's unofficial follow-up to Richard Franklin's **PATRICK** (1978) is both sleazier and more enjoyable than the dreary original. Simplistically scripted by Regnoli - a conscientious worker in the low-rent echelons of Spaghetti exploitation - **PATRICK STILL LIVES** mistakes the adjective 'tawdry' for an instruction, and provides 94 minutes of surprisingly compulsive viewing in the process. As with previous Regnoli/Crisanti collaborations - **ZOMBIE 3/THE NIGHTS OF TERROR** for example - there is much emphasis on gratuitous nudity, and although the film never approaches the shocking pathological violence of Landi's unbelievable **GIALLO A VENEZIA** (also starring Dei and Giordano), there is no shortage of grisly moments. Choice morsels include a slow decapitation by an automatic car window, someone being boiled alive in the swimming pool, a man's throat impaled on a hook and the maid being torn to pieces by a pack of vicious dogs.

Curiously enough, despite showing a graphic crotch stabbing in another of his films, Landi stops short of the point of impact when Giordano is raped by a floating poker. This may, however, have been deleted for the Italian video release. The special effects make-up is of an adequate standard, and each murder is prefaced by a hilarious pair of staring eyes, tackily superimposed onto the screen! Villa's photography is cleanly functional, and some particularly attractive shots are achieved when the action moves into the grounds of the house. The film is also aided by a great sub-Goblin score, which includes the eerie electronic boops and beeps from Bianchi's zombie picture.

In the acting department, the show is constantly stolen by the generously curved Giordano. No stranger to the cinema of sleaze - she had a nipple bitten off in **ZOMBIE 3** - she enters wholeheartedly into the spirit of the venture, stripping off enthusiastically whenever she can. Her finest moment comes when during a sedate dinner party she enters drunk and half naked. Taking exception to comments about her behaviour, she starts a vicious cat-fight with one of the guests and has to be manhandled out of the room! The other cast members perform their duties with routine professionalism, but Pitoeff looks ill at ease amongst the cut-price carnage. You would have thought that appearing in the awful **LAST YEAR AT MARIENBAD** would have prepared him for anything...

Sacha's reservations aside, **PATRICK STILL LIVES** is a solidly entertaining piece of trash, far preferable to the bland, Americanized wallpaper-horror that Italy has been churning out lately. Surely Joe D'Amato would be better served by this cast than the likes of Linda Blair and the appalling David Hasselhoff?

Mark Ashworth

Addendum: My suspicions were confirmed when the film was re-released on video in Italy with the poker scene intact. Mariangela Giordano talks about the film - and the poker scene - in the articles Alan Jones and I wrote for *Shivers* magazine and the second *Shock Xpress* book. (Mark Ashworth, 2002)

PERFORMANCE

Britain, 1970

directors: **Nicolas Roeg and Donald Cammell**

screenplay: **Donald Cammell**

director of photography: **Nicolas Roeg**

editors: **Antony Gibbs, Brian Smedley-Aston, Frank Mazzola**

music: **Jack Nitzsche, Mick Jagger, The Last Poets, Beaver & Krause**

producer: **Sanford Lieberson**

cast: **James Fox** (Chas), **Mick Jagger** (Turner), **Anita Pallenberg** (Pherber), **Michele Breton** (Lucy), **Stanley Meadows** (Rosebloom), **John Bindon** (Moody), **Johnny Shannon** (Harry Flowers), **Allen Cuthbertson** (Lawyer), **Anthony Valentine** (Joey), **Anthony Morton** (Dennis).

Flashback through the years...to the many times I had returned to the rep. cinema in Notting Hill (when it existed). Or sat tripped out with trepidation before the TV screen, with that extra special group of friends; mesmerized by **PERFORMANCE**. We thought it was just for us, like some clandestine ritual. This feeling was confirmed by the backlog of critiques, reviews and features I had read on the film, dating back to its release. Most got it wrong. Or at least read it differently. I had deluded myself into thinking that I had some special, covert empathy with this film...

It was no use going *much further back*. The best pieces had been written most recently. Especially Peter Wollen's eulogy to the film, which appeared in *Sight and Sound* (Sept.95). Several points in his reading coincided with mine. He had even instilled an aura of 'being-there', which I couldn't possibly simulate.

Well, Wittgenstein was right after all. There cannot be a 'private language'. Communication... Writing... Production... Consumption... Process. The process of film making, the process of film writing. Could I juggle? A massive re-think and re-write was required. *No luck have I?*

Process and language are essential features of any film. In **PERFORMANCE** they are *Double* essential, to both form and content

Words still have meaning, even in these days of the computer...

Is language innate or something we learn? Assuming we accept the latter hypothesis as most consistent, then

quite how it is learned becomes problematic. By ostensive definition perhaps? The use of language is a social and cultural function, operating according to unwritten rules. This enables our participation in ritualised language games - analogous to the rules of chess for example. But there are many different games, each with their own rules. Leaping from one situation game to the other requires a process of juggling.

Language is also an alienating process. Compare the early sequence when Chas (James Fox) enters a seedy little porn cinema to extort protection money from its foreign manager. The manager can only converse in pidgin English. *You bleedin' me w'ite*. Chas's confident expression of power and superiority over him increases. He deprecates and insults the poor man, who can barely understand what is being shouted at him. When Chas and his compatriot gangsters converse in the car, their banter is tinged with racist and sexist remarks; *You bastard foreign female* etc. These Others, aliens, outsiders are excluded from their rapport. But when confronted by Turner (Mick Jagger), Chas's self-confidence is reversed. His background and familiarity with discourse has not equipped him to converse with Turner (on the same level). He struggles (juggles) frantically to hide his feeling of inferiority (like the cinema manager earlier).

Business is business and progress is progress. Through the selection and combination of metaphor and metonymy, an association is polemicalised between the notion of 'progress' and the development of capitalist economy. It is addressed directly at the viewing subject as didactic, and posits that the notion of 'progress' can ultimately only be measured by itself. A meaningless tautology. Rather like perception? Monologues and voice-overs, dissociated from the presence (or appearance) of the speaker, highlight the cultural significance of language as a system of representation and power. (e.g. Harry Flowers telling Chas to *be placatory* in his relationship with Maddox, while in frame Maddox's shop is attacked).

Keep personal relationships out of business...and your relations was double personal. Flowers alludes here to Chas's homosexual desire for Joey Maddox. *Innuendo is a method I despise*. Addressed directly at the spectator, this offers an enigmatic clue to one of the artifices used in the form and content of **PERFORMANCE**. To 'despise' implies a denial, a refusal: but clearly this isn't the whole story, because innuendo is then utilized explicitly, spoken by the barrister

in court who denigrated it. It is exposed as a method of self-justification used by hierarchical establishment power, to hide the absence of 'Truth', which it claims alone to possess.

I must insist you address your remarks to me. The high class barrister's rhetoric does not threaten Chas. It is not Other. Chas knows that under the thin veneer of politeness and justice lurks the same brute violence that he dishes out, driven by the same ruthless greed as his business aggregate. More importantly "I", "me" (*Me. Me...me*, a distant echo), are words which are deliberately over used in the film. They are floating signifiers used by each person as the-thing-in-itself. What is the self? How does one define it? Without language?

Again, *Say it*, Chas. Chas's 'coming-out' party was a little disappointing. Not quite the great liberation he had hoped for! *I am a...* He seems somewhat confused, by the role of language, as pertaining to his autonomy as a speaking subject. Perhaps to pronounce it is just as garrulous as to deny it. Trying to tie down floating signifiers again. Besides, there's no point. 'POOF'. The word belongs to everyone. It's writing on the wall!

Process of meaning. Or 'Getting back to zero'.

In cinematic language the chain of signification both incorporates and extends beyond the substitution of metaphors and metonyms. The language of **PERFORMANCE** is strange, ambiguous and ambivalent (vis-a-vis the conventional language of film). It constructs a language of its own. An eclectic concatenation in diametric opposition to film convention. Elliptical, insidious and insinuating...and purposefully aimed to subvert. Sequences are edited - juxtapositions of people and objects within mise-en-scène - to include significations which are incompatible with one another. Polysemy is here a strategic attempt to destroy conventional language and iconographic representation, which is envisaged as a mechanism for constructing false identities. Plurality of meanings undermines any logic based on the principle of identity. The formal structure of **PERFORMANCE** attempts to fracture the belief that any symbolic system of communication can attain truth.

The language of **PERFORMANCE** uses non-conformity as artifice, to fracture, dissociate and disperse all conformity. Games it uses include parody, irony, interrogation and innuendo, as a means towards rupture and

displacement. In this sense the project of **PERFORMANCE** is profoundly Nietzschean. A polemical, fragmented text that relentlessly violates identity, depicting a (the) world in pieces, with no absolute meaning or univocal direction or finality. Instead, a multiplicity of meanings are shaped by a shifting diversity of perspectives.

Polarities are pushed to their apotheosis, where they explode into a continuum of instants. Pure force, which might progress or regress, act or react, ascend or decay, but is always forced to overcome. To Become, To Be. Eternal process. Chas as the extrovert, exterior, active, objective world. Forced, at its furthest extreme, into Turner's introvert, interior, passive, subjective world. Only to be confronted by the nothingness at its apotheosis and forced back into the objective world. Or death. Active versus reactive (Turner as aesthete) Will to Power.

All the signifiers are floating - in a constant state of flux. Even Jack Nitzsche's eerie, enigmatic and quite wonderful soundtrack, collaging music and non-music, diegetic and non-diegetic sound effects. Meaning is up for grabs. Any fixed, essential notion of truth or identity is exterminated in the play of masks, a play that is apparent in both the shifting language games between Turner and Chas and the performances of Jagger and Fox as actors. Incongruous close-ups are edited in to clue the viewer: Chas's wide-eyed red-face when he washes out the paint/hair-dye disguise, Turner's theatrical and effete appearance, over made-up white face with black highlights, the wild (pop) comic-strip illustration of Turner. Turner's world of chaos does not signify disorder, but the multiplicity of impulses, undetermined and formless, within which art and knowledge delineate their perspectives. And with the collapse of all values, a getting back to Zero (Oh, and the unconscious no doubt - yawn).

While performing, playing Chas, Edward - I mean James - Fox (the master in **THE SERVANT**) proclaims, *I know who I am. Do you know who you are?* Without doubt, *Jack the lad*; all that suit-clad sartorial elegance and clean-cut Kennedy, Man from U.N.C.L.E. mod-gangster **PERSONA**. Unequivocally, *I am a bullet*. Certainly, *A juggler*... almost everything - except a poof, of course. He dye-colours his hair red, and dons sunglasses. Appears in *narcissistic* photographs as a spivish, moustached, decidedly *dodgy* looking character - who *Don't wear 'ats*. The shame of it all, ending up in a long-hair wig, make-up, Moroccan and/or women's clothes, not quite sure whether he wants to be Jim Morrison (whose picture popped up on the bedroom wall) or the latest Warhol drag protégé.

Dull and pedantic - sure, but *Say it anyway*. Chas is hunter and perpetrator become victim, master/slave (bondsman, whatever?). He's the Ego to Flower's Super-Ego and Turner's Id (careful now, don't get sucked into that!). Foreclosure - a phone-call to mother, not dad. Flowers as patriarch. Chas and Madox, Cain and Abel. Chas the son, all ready to assume the name of the Father... *I'd give anything to get that Harry Flowers here, right now*, says Madox. *Will I do?*, asks you-know-who. Madox threatens that ascent. *His name stays over the door if he wants*, says Flowers. In killing Madox, Chas transgresses patriarchal law. (And did I hear an 'I' for Ronnie Kray too? Or is he just an actor playing an actor? - Jagger a rock idol playing a rock idle).

Dionysos, Chas as Nietzsche's favourite God. Of war, destruction, intoxication, art. (You select the incorrect one!). On the run from Zeus and the inhabitants of Mount Olympus who have ordered his death. But incognito he can escape his destiny. So long as he performs...

Chas is also becoming, playing Turner. Why the big fuss about the transformation to Turner at the end? It's just a mask, 'it's just a skirt and sweater' (cf. **FEMALE TROUBLE**). Did anyone really get killed? The transformation has already been alluded to earlier, when close-ups of Chas's and Turner's faces are superimposed upon each other, like masks. Even Madox gets up to beg for mercy, apparently unscathed after being shot in the head at **POINT BLANK** range. Another old Godard device. (Like **PERFORMANCE**, Jean-Luc Godard's **ONE PLUS ONE/SYMPATHY FOR THE DEVIL**, starring the Rolling Stones, was censored and re-edited by the producers - much to the director's anger).

The language of **PERFORMANCE** is not mystical - although this possibility isn't excluded. It is not so much metaphysical (although from another perspective escaping metaphysical language is impossible). It is mythical language, neither truth nor falsity, but a different kind of language, necessitating the suspension of time. When Chas enters the door at Powys Square, there is an accession to a ritual passage of time. This moment is of course the major fissure, the key disruption of the whole film, when weirdness really begins to proliferate. Like a different film, leaving behind the Thriller/Gangster movie genre conventions which dominate the first half. (Although more subtle, fleetingly glimpsed subversion devices are interpolated from the very start. Diegetic/non-diegetic music - *Turn that up, I like that*; voice-overs and flashbacks - *He had a blinding*

left hook says Flowers (or was it Chas) while in frame Madox boxes. Some of these techniques had already become acceptable conventions of the Thriller genre. (Flashbacks, soliloquy, monologues, voice-over narratives, dramatic variations of *chiaroscuro*, soft-focus lenses and other visual effects etc.) Primarily these devices were developed in early German Expressionist films and popularised by Film Noir in the 1940's Hollywood thriller. But there they were applied according to austere symbolic codes, verified by a consistency criterion. **PERFORMANCE** simultaneously pays homage to and mocks these rules - 'Turner' as 'Jagger' as 'Flowers' even performs a cacophonous musical/dance number and exhibits Hollywood Musical conventions - further flaunting its systematic inconsistency!

This, by association with '60's chic radicalism, perhaps recalls Theodor Adorno's polemical essays. It is the formal structure of **PERFORMANCE** which offers the potential of a radical, modernist aesthetic. The "long-hairs" and the "short-hairs" engaged in a dialectical conflict which lays bare the contradictions and violence inherent in the system. In content stark antinomies are juxtaposed, shifting from the social to the psychological, to a point where they arrest each other, freezing the possibility of dialectical advance. Thereby suspending the myth of (temporal) progress. This can (and has) been interpreted as political conservatism. A deep pessimism was always prevalent in Adorno's writing, as in this film. Adorno, whose influence and popularity grew after the war, infused the German students' movement in the 1960s. Both Adorno and **PERFORMANCE** refuse to offer any prescriptive or utopian solution to the "negative totality". Both show brutality and hypocrisy lurking beneath the cozy veneer of state and establishment, and each remains equally keen to keep some distance from the optimism of spuriously radical alternatives (personified in **PERFORMANCE** by Jagger).

A genealogical dissection of the '60s underground - criminal sub-cultures. In one manifestation this is a meeting of violence and violence. Chas and his gangster fraternity, already rife with internal power struggles and hypocrisy. Eastern/East Enders, analogous to the then communist block (state capitalism) disclaiming their roots (marxism) *Or I'm a bloody communist!* And Turner's milieu in their Western (West London - Notting Hill) *bohemian atmosphere*. Chas, the dissident in exile, arrives begging for asylum (drug-culture, rock music, eastern mysticism; *Long-hair...Beatniks...*).

Each of the two central protagonists reflects the Other. The mirror image is narcissistic and violent. Chas is undergoing an identity crisis, such as Lacan argues is the process undergone by every child. Self recognition is delusory, including the myth of control, of autonomous individuality. But with access to Language - the name of the Father - the inescapable, crushing weight of "our" culture bears down on our shoulders. A retrogressive, reactive mode asserts itself.

Ultimately the differences between Turner and Chas may triumph over their similarities, over the otherness which is already internalised by each (the final death of one being purely symbolic). It is not the master consuming the bondsman, or the conquest of otherness, that is performed, but a potential recognition and acceptance of their cultural differences - as well as their similarities - to Otherness itself.

The framing of each shot in **PERFORMANCE** is oblique and imaginative. Unconventional angles on people and objects in conjunction with quick edits form associative montage sequences. Repeatedly the viewer is tricked and manipulated by being allowed only a single glance at some polymorphous shape or form. (i.e: the early shots from ground level where the camera points up at Chas's arms, hands and part of his chest, when he performs his morning exercises).

Probably the most effective example of these techniques is the film's most violent sequence. Chas is beaten-up, stripped and whipped in his own flat, by Madox and his two henchmen. Close-ups and medium shots of the struggle within the darkly lit room are quickly edited. Red (supposedly Chas's blood) is smeared around the walls, 'POOF'. A red tint fills the frame, after Chas shoots Madox. The gleaming cut-throat razor which is held up against Chas's face (phallic symbolism abounds). Not used after Madox screams, *No...I'm not one of those. I'm not him*. Even in the uncensored whipping sequence, Madox is only shown inflicting a few clear strokes of the belt over Chas's back, and these are visibly light, almost playful blows, suggesting (as intended) a gay S&M role-play session, rather than a serious beating. This highlights precisely what the actors were playing on the set.

The sequence cross-cuts to Turner (making his first appearance) spraying red paint on the wall, further adding to the illusion of extreme violence. Close-ups and background detail of the destruction of Chas's furniture and possessions contrast to earlier scenes depicting his obsessive neatness and tidiness. The ripped pillows and scattered

feathers, the messy chaos of the violent events perhaps allude to the revolutionary climax of Vigo's **ZERO DE CONDUITE**. Tearing apart of Chas's clothes, flashbacks to Chas's earlier sexual encounter (on the same bed). All quickly edited as **CUT-UPS** (William Burroughs/Balch super-8 shorts), emphasising the violence of the 'cut' itself. Threatening dialogue, cries, groans and exaggerated punch sounds, spliced non-diegetic music, noises and sound effects... Used in conjunction, they conspire to arouse the viewer's own salacious expectations into believing that the violence witnessed is far more visceral than it actually is. The whipping sequence recalls the bath torture of the OAS agent in Godard's **LE PETIT SOLDAT** Identity crisis/agent on the run from one's violent peer group (and Burroughs again, "The man who plays The Soft Machine" sings Turner).

Finally the sequence rotates again. The victim becomes the perpetrator. Chas feigns unconsciousness to 'trick' the excited rabble for a few vital seconds, and retrieves his gun. The playful master/slave role reversal of gay SM play becomes increasingly explicit. Chas proudly aims his phallic signifier at Madox, who begs for mercy - and is symbolically shot by Chas (*I am a bullet*). In a continuation scene interestingly cut by Warners, Madox (remarkably unscathed) crawls towards Chas. The audience gets Chas's point-of-view shot, looking down at Madox - the kneeling victim.

Other devices used in the panoply of **PERFORMANCE** to disorientate and dislocate the viewer, bringing her/him into a transient, drug crazed vortex include: Cuts and fades to black and white, speed zooming in and out, freeze-frame, jump-cut, fish-eye lens, superimposition, dialectical montage etc... Within mise-en-scène: shifting of identification and empathy. Distancing by repeatedly reminding the watcher of the voyeuristic, scopophilic process. These include: film within film (the porno cinema and cut to trial jury watching judging), using camera as prop (Anita Pallenberg playing with cine camera in bed. Interesting here is a woman directing the camera gaze on a nude male body). A stereoscopic viewer frame as a prop in the plot (again it is the female characters who highlight the importance of light in the production process - looking at the desert, *Would it be better without the bandits ?*).

Repeatedly the viewer is assaulted with surrealist shock tactics of Bunuelian proportions : sex and violence

associations, fragmentary body shots, narrative disruption etc. Challenging the complacency of the passive consumer. Or does it..? Assault is an active, male attribute.

Seduction and ambivalence are also formal strategies... In the sense of 'woman' (as seductive object) and of femininity. Ambivalence in the sense of Andy Warhol, of Popism (Pop Art frequents the background and foreground elements of the film). Ambivalence towards drugs, morality, violence, promiscuity - the refusal to be judgemental.

ON DANDYISM: SYMBOLIC DECADENCE [OR DEADBEAT ANTECEDENTS]

"I called to the executioners that I might gnaw at their rifle-butts while dying. I called to the plagues to smother me in blood, in sand. Misfortune was my God. I laid myself down in the mud. I dried myself in the air of crime. I played sly tricks on madness." - from *A Season in Hell* - Arthur Rimbaud.

Re-vivification of Dandyism - the Decadent and Symbolist movements, is a leitmotif in **PERFORMANCE**. Bohemianism and non-conformity, anarchic romanticising of criminality, drug-induced apoplectic states verging on madness, nihilistic *ennui* - boredom with the vicissitudes of everyday life and history. Celebration of the slow death of civilisation, while simultaneously contemptuous of the 'back-to-nature' notions of Romanticism. A world-weary pessimism which believes all hope to be hopeless...

"As a matter of fact, artifice was considered by Des Esseintes to be the distinctive mark of human genius." from *Against Nature*, J.K. Huysmans

From the moment Chas arrives at Powys Square, Notting Hill Gate (established with a montage of static camera, naturalistic location shots, accompanied by a non diegetic blues guitar melody) the celebration of decadence begins. 'Decadence' is derived from the Latin 'cadere' meaning to fall. 'Decay', like its French counterpart 'decair', is to rot, to deteriorate from a state of healthiness. The house exteriors reflect the Regency, Post-Georgian style of architecture. Popular for middle-class town houses of the early 19th Century incorporating Greek and Italian influences in an aesthetic of refinement.

Brick buildings fronted with painted plaster or stucco.

By the 1960s however, the original elegance of these buildings had been ravaged by neglect and decay. The middle-classes had moved on, abandoning the area to poor people, first post-war immigrants and a generation of bohemian artists and youth cultures who thrived on this state of continual transience. It had become delightfully squalid (prior that is to the 1980s influx of yuppies, who really lowered the tone of the neighborhood).

*If rape and poison, cutting blade and fire,
Have not inscribed their tale upon our souls,
To display the banality of our appointed roles,
They fail because we find the thought too dire.*

To the Reader in Fleurs du Mal, Charles Baudelaire

Baudelaire, the 19th Century poet and first self-proclaimed Dandy, revolutionised the Parisian (and later Pan-European) art scene - inspiring cafe society and the Symbolist movement: Rimbaud, Verlaine, Rachilde, Lorrain etc... Aesthetes who attempted to reconstruct their whole lives as works of art. This by living to excess every detail of their existences. From adopting effete affectations, to the subtle nuances of their designed interiors, and sartorial elegance of their attire. (Often incorporating Orientalist influences, based upon fetishistic and eroticised notions which attempted to explain middle and far Eastern cultural difference, in the wake of the Napoleonic conquests).

"What he wanted was colours which would appear stronger and clearer in artificial light. He did not particularly care if they looked crude and insipid in daylight, for he lived most of his life at night, holding that night afforded greater intimacy and isolation and that the mind was truly roused and stimulated only by awareness of the dark... a sort of enjoyment in which vanity may have played some small part... to find that all around them the world is dark, silent and dead." - Against Nature, Huysmans.

Affectations nurtured by Turner in **PERFORMANCE** - along with their sexual promiscuity, drug experimentation, rejection of the world of 'normality', and adoration of criminals. It is this world which seduces Chas. But as always, seduction is a two-way process...

What's more, Baudelaire and the poets he inspired did not write for the conventional, lyric audience. Yet Baudelaire addresses a poem *To the Reader*. Breaking radically with tradition, these poets remain enigmatic and esoteric - difficult to understand, inspiring controversial and differing interpretations. They are codified messages apparently aimed at 'kindred spirits', other individuals who share some symbolic empathy, or feel that they can relate a sort of 'inner experience' with the poets texts. This is not the place to be concerned about their notions of 'inner experience'. More relevant however (in the context of what has been said in the main feature) is that even the formal strategies favoured by the Symbolists find common ground in **PERFORMANCE**.

PERFORMANCE was a vanguard movie - in poignantly attempting to challenge and push back the boundaries of censorship. Aware that it was challenging not only the British Board of Film Censors, but the corporate, commercial US film production and distribution. As Tom Dewe Mathews sums up in *Censored* (Chatto and Windus, 1994). "Warners removed twenty minutes of footage, mostly from the beginning of the film, which lent a jarring note to what was already a confusing plot for those uninitiated in drug lore. But the studio perpetrated an even more blatant form of censorship in February 1969 when it decided to shelve the film for nearly two years. After this the official censorship began, and in its British guise this consisted of sixteen further cuts. Trevelyan was particularly insistent that a shot of Chas being flogged, which is intercut with his back being clawed by a girlfriend during a love scene, should be extensively re-edited... He said he could not endorse an explicit statement of Chas's sado-masochism... Warners pre-empted the board and took out the intercutting."

I feel as if I've been through a cement mixer!

Flashback through the years...With each viewing, a different reading, another interpretation. Different doubts... Different questions... Everything written here is mistaken, misleading... But one question keeps recurring...

Can I juggle?

Chris Barber

PIERROT LE FOUaka **IL BANDITO DELLE UNDICI/CRAZY PETE**

Italy/France, 1965

director: **Jean-Luc Godard**screenplay: **Jean-Luc Godard**, from the novel "Obsession"
by **Lionel White**director of photography: **Raoul Coutard**editor: **Françoise Collin**music: **Antoine Duhamel**producer: **Georges de Beauregard**

cast: **Jean-Paul Belmondo** (Ferdinand Griffon, 'Pierrot'), **Anna Karina** (Marianne Renoir), **Samuel Fuller** (himself), **Dirk Sanders** (Fred, Marianne's brother), **Raymond Devos** (frightened man), **Graziella Galvani** (Ferdinand's wife), **Roger Dutoit**, **Hans Meyer** (Gangster), **Jimmy Karoubi** (Dwarf), **Christa Nell** (Mme Staquet).

Why, you ask, review a quintessential experimental art movie in this journal? Godard himself might argue that this question is rhetorical (were he to express the semantic wit which proliferates from this film). If there is a place here for Godard at all, one might expect **WEEKEND**, a bloody and apocalyptic vision of the future, to be more appropriate. But in Godard's words "*Life is the subject, with scope and colour as its attributes*", and naturally for Godard, life implies the horror of existence, and death. Or more particularly in this case, the futility and meaningless stupidity of life (absurdity). It such a dialectic sounds dubious, spurious or unreasonable to you, console yourself with the fact that, having being unavailable for several years, a new print of this masterpiece was re-released last year.

Jean-Paul Belmondo becomes bored and frustrated with his affluent, Parisian, middle class father/husband role. He is even more bored at a social gathering of his work acquaintances. For them, a swinging party means standing around drinking cocktails and conversing with each other using prosaic paraphrases from hard-sell advertisements. Belmondo leaves his wife at this wild gathering and returns home, to find his babysitter, Anna Karina, asleep. He offers to take her home, then leaves his home and family with her, never to return.

They reveal their sexual desires for each other. Leaving Paris and the whole social hegemony behind

them, they drive south. Consumed by their mutual, obsessive love, they beg, steal and kill for what they need - he only slightly assailed by any guilt, her not at all. For they have consumed each other's passions and only scarcity threatens their happiness.

Of course, this period of happiness must be curtailed. His self-doubt and intellectual romanticism leads to inertia. Her intellectual inferiority and desire to consume leads to negation. She ventures off alone to meet her brother - a gun-runner. She phones Belmondo - her Pierrot - saying she's in danger and pleading for help. He runs to her rescue but she has already left, leaving a corpse stabbed in the neck. Before he can assess his situation, he is captured and tortured by her brother. However, he is soon released. Unable to find her, he begins to rebuild his life alone.

Unexpectedly, Karina shows up again, asking him to help her and her brother steal some cash from the gun-running network. He has begun to realise that she is a *femme fatale*, entangling him in a web of lies and intrigue. But he is still too in love to escape the destiny she has carved for him. He plays his part in the violent subterfuge and hands her the money. She betrays him and runs (or rather, cruises) off with the cash. He pursues and kills her, and wraps dynamite around his head to commit suicide. Having ignited the fuse, he realises the incongruity of the situation. "*How stupid*", he cries as he grabs the fuse to douse it. These are his last words as the film reaches its explosive climax.

Pierrot was the archaic popular tragi-com figure, or fool for love, of French theatre and pantomime. **PIERROT LE FOU** is Godard's most consciously existential film. Beautifully photographed, it uses locations imaginatively to create an air of classical simplicity.

Life is a metaphysical journey - "*...to the end of the night*", says Belmondo, recalling Céline's novel - that only ends in death. In this movie, as in life, you must think on your feet while being bombarded/bombasted by a series of philosophical, political and psychological diatribes. But there is never a prolix. The disjuncture between sound and vision at certain moments thrusts you into a state of epistemological awareness.

PIERROT is mid-60s Godard. Belmondo, the romantic victim of betrayal by the woman he loves, looks back to **A BOUT DE SOUFFLE** (1959). The remnants of bodies and wrecked cars from a motorway accident (the violence

inherent in the system) look forward to **WEEKEND** (1967). Belmondo tortured by having a rag wrapped around his head and repeatedly soaked in water (simulated drowning) reflects Godard's concern with the Algerian war. The French army were using this method to torture Arab prisoners.

The hero's inner turmoil over his pursuit of intellectual and aesthetic perfection, and his belief in constant change, are juxtaposed against his erotic, sexual desires and yearning for stability. These obsessions affect his relationship - especially when confronted by the more shallow, basic desires of the Karina character. This theme was reflected in **LE MEPRIS** (aka **CONTEMPT**) and explored by Nicolas Roeg in **BAD TIMING**. Encompassing this is an ubiquitous humour; the sense of irony that surrounds Belmondo, the romantic ditty the couple sing, a risible chance meeting with a stand-up comedian. (Penn's **BONNIE AND CLYDE**, influenced by **PIERROT**, lost all this).

Art references abound. Belmondo reads aloud from a biography on Velasquez, whose claustrophobic juxtapositions of people capture a sublimated awareness of spacial relationships. The film's use of scope retains this awareness of space - not only between the characters within the frame, but also between them and the camera, the space outside of the frame, and the space between the film and audience. The Picasso prints on interior walls, and Belmondo's blue face mask, suggest Picasso's blue period and the tribal mask influence. References to Pop Art and Symbolism are also frequent.

The ideological stance in **PIERROT LE FOU** is far more ambiguous and less didactic than in later movies like **LA CHINOISE**, pre-dating it's dogmatic straitjacket of Althusserian structuralism, but the sympathies are still apparent. A cameo appearance by Sam Fuller, reciting the scenario for yet another American-style action thriller, or a theatrical reconstruction of the Vietnam war, to con money out of American tourists whilst showing them their own hypocritical stupidity. Godard displays his own paradoxical position between the influences of trash American culture and European radical agit-prop. This was the war between Coca-Cola and Karl Marx, which now appears to be lost. Nonetheless, **PIERROT LA FOU** remains an essential work with an inherently liberating cadence.

Chris Barber

PINK NARCISSUS

USA, 1971

writer / director / photog'y: 'Anonymous' [Jim Bidgood]

editor: **Martin Jay Sadoff**

music: **Martin Jay Sadoff, Gary Goch**

cast: **Bobby Kendall** (Narcisse), **Charles Ludlum**, various street people.

Narcissism is a subject which attracts gay artists like flies to honey. It's there in the self-contemplative masochism of Derek Jarman's **SEBASTIANE** and is virtually life-blood to the creations of Jean Genet, a writer whose work clearly exerted an influence on James Bidgood, director of **PINK NARCISSUS**.

In spite of being one of the worst prints ever projected in a London cinema, **PINK NARCISSUS** has an undeniable visual impact, set in a strange model landscape which at times reminded me of *Tales of the River Bank* if photographed by Luciano Tovoli! From the opening shot as the camera explores lush, improbably coloured vegetation, crawling with stop-motion insect life, the sense of having entered a separate and very private world is beautifully achieved.

Location established, Bidgood focuses on the languid, masturbatory existence of Kendall, the film's central 'character', a handsome and monumentally narcissistic youth in his mid teens. Now, at first one doesn't mind going with the director's rapt adulation of young Bob's torso, limbs, ass, etc. In this instance, though, the old adage of 'too much of a good thing' definitely applies. Especially after an hour of Bobby gazing at his reflection, undressing, dressing again, pouting into the middle distance, and in one interminable scene stimulating his naked torso with a blade of grass. For variation several of Bobby's character fantasies are rolled out - Turkish slave-boy chic for instance, or how about the snazzy matador look? Or maybe he should just continue looking vacantly into one of his dozen or so mirrors? Things degenerate into kitsch at this point - a drab rent-boy dressed in leathers rides a motorbike across Bobby's bedroom, playing bull to Bobby's matador posturing.

Although it's always striking and obsessive, the design quality varies, with the brittle, shimmering exteriors much more successful than the cluttered antiquated camp of the jewel-encrusted bedroom interior, all white muslin and sub-Andrew Logan paiste 'creations'. Bobby's immaculately

sculpted buttocks, trapped mercilessly in a pair of tight white jeans, provide distraction, and the bizarre scenes set in a parody red-light area with scuzzy Caligari-cardboard shop fronts raise a few laughs. There's also a brilliantly filmed scene in which Bobby showers naked in the rain during a violent, blue-tinted thunderstorm, and a uniquely 'head-on' cum-shot.

But the constant mirror-gazing, posturing and onanistic absorption eventually turn Bobby Kendall into an unappealing tight-assed jerk, his sexual obsessions merely banal. As 'punters' we are expected to be drooling, aroused, captivated - and willing to approve this celebration of the bottomless Narcissistic pit - instead of rejecting it as the empty indulgence it really is. One would care less if it were content to be pornography, but instead it operates smugly within the 'decadent' underground style of Anger et al. Moments of undeniable beauty and odd flashes of inspiration aside, **PINK NARCISSUS** remains a prick-tease for the Gay-Art crowd, wallowing in the frustration that 'unattainable beauty' brings. What this film really needs is a damn good rape scene!

Addendum: Fifteen years of easy access to gay hard-core pornography has somewhat sated the frustrations captured all too clearly in my first published review! Looking at this remarkable film in a more relaxed frame of mind, I find myself far more able to drift with its visual fantasies, even if I don't share them all myself. Prick-tease it may be, but it's a labour of love with a magical, timeless beauty too. That said, I still stand by that last line!

Since **PINK NARCISSUS** reappeared in the late 1980s, more has emerged of the story behind this extraordinary film. The mystery of its 'Anonymous' creator can now be revealed...

James Bidgood was born in Wisconsin in 1933. At 18 he moved to New York and entered the fashion and design world, working as a window dresser (like Andy Warhol) before turning to costume design. In 1963 he began a parallel career as a freelance photographer for magazines such as *Muscleboy* and *The Young Physique*. Like Bob Mizer's *Athletic Model Guild* publications, these magazines were, in their day, the prime source of erotic imagery for gay men. Whilst in earlier decades such publications had just about managed to maintain a pretense of being aimed at 'students of male anatomy', by the mid-sixties the homoerotic realities were bolder and clearer. Bidgood's lavish, dreamlike tableaux

depicted sullen, handsome young men photographed in various period settings, with lighting and art design investing their beauty with the aura of a magical Kingdom of pleasure.

Bidgood's ambitions soon grew to include the cinema. He had just begun what was to be a lengthy relationship with a dark-haired, pouting young thing called Bobby Kendall, and it was this stunningly handsome youth that fuelled his cinematic obsession. However, all did not go as planned.

PINK NARCISSUS was shot between 1964 and 1970 and eventually abandoned unfinished, despite the financial input of porno producers Sherpix, who allotted around \$27,000 and two young editors to the project. Bidgood's obsessive attention to detail and his desire to totally control all aspects of the film drove him to greater and greater technical challenges, so when Sherpix injected cash and moved the production over from Super-8 to 16mm, Bidgood went even further overboard. Rather than helping to finish the project, the expanded production facilities merely amplified the director's ambitions. Eventually, Bidgood arrived at the editing room one day to find that Sherpix had moved the editors, along with the film, to a secret location where a final version was completed without his involvement. He was shown a rough cut and invited to send notes for a final edit but Bidgood declined to respond. The company released their cut in 1971 but a furious Bidgood refused to have any further association with the film, and the directing credit was given as 'Anonymous'. After its initial run the film fell out of circulation, with its obscurity leading some to surmise it was lost. However, in the mid-eighties, a print began showing up in repertory at London's Scala Cinema, and it was this version that I saw for my review.

Stephen Thrower

PLOT OF FEAR
aka ...E TANTA PAURA
Italy, 1976

director: **Paolo Cavara**
screenplay: **Bernardino Zapponi, P. Cavara, Enrico Oldoini**
director of photography: **Franco Di Giacomo**
editor: **Sergio Montanari**
music: **Daniele Patucchi**
producers: **Ermanno Curti, Guy Luongo**

Black & White by Peter Lindbergh



cast: **Michele Placido** (Inspector Lorenzo Romei), **Corinne Clery** (Jeanne), **Tom Skerritt** (Chief Inspector), **John Steiner** (Hoffmann), **Eli Wallach** (Pietro Riccio), **Quinto Parmeggiani** (Angelo Scanavini), **Eddy Fay [Edoardo Gajeta]** (Fulvio Colajanni), **Jacques Herlin** (Inspector Pandolfi), **Greta Vajan** (guest at Villa Hoffmann), **Sarah Crespi** (Rosa Catena).

Paolo Cavara co-wrote this excellent murder-mystery with Bernardino Zapponi, Argento's collaborator on the script of **DEEP RED**. Cavara, who also directed **THE WILD EYE**, an impressive account of mondo moviemakers' cynicism, is one of the more intelligent practitioners of Italian commercial cinema, and here he manages to turn even the humdrum *giallo-poliziesco* into something special.

A series of (thankfully quite brutal) murders have the police baffled. The wealthy victims all belonged to a pressure group called 'Wildlife Friends', but it turns out these animal lovers had ulterior motives - and a rather cavalier approach to human life. Inspector Romei (Placido, bearing a curious resemblance to Freddie Mercury) discusses the case with ultra-cynic Pietro Riggio (Wallach), super-rich boss of a hi-tech private detective agency, and falls in love with Jeanne (Clery), a young woman who knows more than she's telling about the goings on at Villa Hoffman. The well-named 'Wildlife Friends' were serious party animals, and one of their shindigs ended with the death of a hired prostitute, Rosa Catena. Is someone avenging her death by killing the guests who were there that night?

There are many eccentric and enjoyable facets to this byzantine thriller, some blackly comic, others either horrific or thought-provoking. Dark undercurrents are provided by the emphasis on surveillance and paranoia, and the ever-present Italian spectre of institutionalized corruption. The name of the dead whore, Rosa Catena, from whom the mystery unfolds - literally 'Red Chain' - is itself enough to indicate the self-consciousness of the writing. There are several hints that Cavara's aims are more pointed than usual for the generally fatuous *giallo* genre. There's a disturbing friction between a standard 'cops versus crims' story and a world of moral relativism. Inspector Romei seems a nice guy, but he also seems to choose what to follow up based on private convictions not the law.

The rest of the characters are cyphers, though with a twist (for instance, the dead Rosa's pimp is apprehended because he attends her grave on the anniversary of her death to place flowers). There's an ironic quality to much of

the dialogue which raises this story well above the rather turgid sub-genre its located in. Strongest of all is the performance of Eli Wallach as Pietro Riggio, a Cronenbergish creation whose sardonic attitude leaves him an ambiguous figure to the end.

Stephen Thrower

LA PORTIERA NUDA
aka **THE NAKED CONCIERGE**
Italy, 1975

writer/director: **Luigi Cozzi**
director of photography: **Roberto Girometti**
editor: **Carlo Reali**
music: **Manuel De Sica**
producer: **Giorgio Bracardi**

cast: **Irene Miracle** (Gianna), **Giorgio Bracardi**, **Mario Carotenuto**, **Daniela Giordano**, **Enzo Garinieri**, **Francesca Romana Coluzzi**, **Erika Blanc** (lesbian), **Aldo Alori**, **Luciano Bonanni**, **Vera Drudi**.

Luigi Cozzi directed his first movie in 1968, an adaptation of Frederick Pohl's **THE TUNNEL UNDER THE WORLD**. But his career didn't really take off until he was given the one seal of approval that counted during the twilight of the sixties. An obsessed film buff since his early teens (he was editor of *Galaxy* magazine and the Italian correspondent for *Famous Monsters of Filmland*), Cozzi saw Dario Argento's ground-breaking **THE BIRD WITH THE CRYSTAL PLUMAGE** in 1969 and wanted to add his own praise to all the wide-spread critical acclaim.

Finally Cozzi got hold of Argento's phone number and nervously gave him a call. The fledgeling director was surprised but very flattered by this complete stranger raving about his film and agreed to meet Cozzi for a social night out. They spent the entire evening discussing their favourite directors and movies, and forged a lasting friendship that eventually resulted in their co-ownership of Italy's first science-fiction and horror bookshop, *Profundo Rosso*.

Cozzi directed **THE SPIDER** in 1970 but it was Argento who gave him his biggest break; the co-scripting assignment on **FOUR FLIES ON GREY VELVET** in 1971. Then Argento produced a four-part RAI TV series under the umbrella title

La Porta sul Buio/ The Door to the Dark in 1972 and asked Cozzi to direct one of the episodes. Because Argento personally introduced each segment, the main reason why he became a household name and a homefront superstar, Cozzi found himself in the new talent frontline as far as influential producers were concerned. Cozzi eventually remade his TV segment *Il Vicino do Casa* as **THE MURDERER MUST KILL AGAIN** in 1975, just after directing the sexploitation feature **LA PORTIERA NUDA**.

LA PORTIERA NUDA now embarrasses Cozzi, but in truth it's one of his more entertaining efforts. I would sit through it again in preference to **STARCRASH**, **HERCULES**, **CONTAMINATION** or Cozzi's own personal favourite **STELLA**. It was produced by Giorgio Bracardi, then the Italian equivalent of Les Dawson, who wanted a starring vehicle to showcase his comic talents. When he hired Cozzi as director he insisted on two things. Because Salvatore Samperi's **MALIZIA** had been a huge Italian box-office hit in 1973, the film had to feature a shot similar to the Laura Antonelli paparazzi favourite - a mini-skirted actress halfway up a ladder exposing her crotch. The poster design would then exploit this familiar come-on pose by proxy. Also, the title had to echo Liliana Cavani's 1973 art-sleaze hit **THE NIGHT PORTER/ IL PORTIERE DI NOTTE**. With this in mind Cozzi wrote the script, casting unknown Irene Miracle in the lead role.

LA PORTIERA NUDA could easily sport the alternative title 'Confessions of a Naked Concierge'. Miracle plays Gianna, a prick-teasing virgin, who takes on the job at a suburban Rome apartment block solely for somewhere to live. As she goes about her daily cleaning, the inhabitants in each flat try to seduce her in turn. There's the sleazeball film producer in the penthouse who tries the casting couch trick. But Gianna takes one look at the poster for his new production - 'Wet Cries and Whispers' - declines his offer and makes a hasty exit. There's the psychologist in his chic red office who tries to explain her frigidity in Freudian terms while desperately trying to lure her into bed. Then there are the hippies who invite her to join a psychedelic sleep-in and pass her joints hoping for a drug-crazed gang-bang. And there's the lonely widow Erika Blanc who slips from a twin set and pearls into a more comfortable green bri-nylon negligée in an effort to prime Gianna in the delights of lesbian sex. Throughout all these farcical misadventures Miracle manages to disrobe with wild abandon while keeping her chasteness intact. The movie ends as Miracle's knight with shining

ardour turns up and, because he's very rich, she allows herself to get fucked at last. Goldiggers of 1975 - Italian style!

Every sexploitation convention is contained in **LA PORTIERA NUDA** with a below average vengeance. Lip-smacking tit-and-ass soft-core porn is spliced into the expected travelogue diversions of nubile Miracle getting wolf-whistled and her bum pinched while sight-seeing the Spanish Steps, the Coliseum and the Trevi Fountains. Every now and again the action screeches to a halt as Bracardi indulges in moronic slapstick and stand-up routines in hand-held static camera shots. But despite all this, Cozzi invests the film with a certain avant-garde elegance. The pot-party is a breathless montage of vertically shot nude go-go girls and dreamy acid lighting to match. And the female liberation angle is unusual for this type of bland programmer. If anything **LA PORTIERA NUDA** is just too good for the rough trade grindhouse circuit. Sure it's crass, but not in the leering way this type of movie often mistakes for eroticism. Cozzi takes too much care in setting up the woefully thin material and two-dimensional characterisations for it to be dismissed as just another sex comedy targeted at the randy *ragazzi* demographic. The reason why the movie flopped was that it wasn't ordinary enough for the auditorium jerk-off brigade. And Irene Miracle might just as well have sleep-walked throughout the whole affair for all the oozing sexuality she doesn't bring to her role.

LA PORTIERA NUDA is worth catching if you can, with major reservations. It was released on video in Italy in the early eighties, but now seems impossible to find. The copy under review was Cozzi's own and if he's got anything to do with it that's exactly the way it's going to stay!

Alan Jones

RABID DOGS
aka **CANI ARRABBIATI/ SEMAFORO ROSSO/ KIDNAPPED!**

Italy, 1974. Restored version 1996

director: **Mario Bava**
screenplay: **Alessandro Parenzo, Cesare Frugoni**
director of photography: **Emilio Varriano**
editor: **Paolo Cottignola**
music: **Stelvio Cipriani**
producer: **Roberto Loyola**

cast: **Riccardo Cucciolla** (Riccardo), **Aldo Caponi** ('Blade'), **Luigi Montefiori** ('32'), **Lea Lander** [Lea Kruger] (Maria, called 'Greta Garbo'), **Maurice Poli** (doctor), **Erika Dario** (hitch-hiker), **Marisa Fabbri** (Marisa), **Gustavo De Nardo** (gas station attendant).

CAUTION: THIS REVIEW DISCUSSES THE TWIST ENDING

Unless the Iranians ever let Orson Welles's **THE OTHER SIDE OF MIDNIGHT** out of the vault it has languished in since the fall of the Shah, this 1974 Mario Bava suspense thriller stands as the most astonishing quarter-century-late movie ever delivered. By now, Eyeball readers will have heard the story of how the film was stalled late in post-production by a bankruptcy and went into a limbo from which it has only just emerged. Legal tussles even prevented it from appearing at the 1998 NFT Bava retrospective where it should, by rights, have been the triumphant centrepiece. Even more remarkable than the circumstances of its arrival is the fact that the film is at once such a fresh and striking piece of work and so different from anything else in the Bava canon, forcing us to reassess all assumptions about the director. There might perhaps be a link with the cynical misanthropy of **TWITCH OF THE DEATH NERVE** in attitude, but the mood, pacing and intensity of the film are entirely different. **RABID DOGS** seems, especially in a sequence where a couple of grinning grunge psychopaths force an abducted woman to urinate in front of them, to have been influenced by Wes Craven's **THE LAST HOUSE ON THE LEFT**, and perhaps also that Al Lettieri-Sally Struthers sub-plot of Peckinpah's **THE GETAWAY**.

After a payroll heist, during which a couple of chemical company employees are killed by hoods in **CLOCKWORK ORANGE** masks and the robbers' driver is shot and killed, three fleeing thugs, plus a woman snatched in an underground car park, force their way into a car driven by the buttoned-down, diminutive Riccardo (Riccardo Cucciolla). Also in the car is an unconscious but ailing child, wrapped in a blanket despite the heat of the day, whom Riccardo says he must get to hospital. Doc (Maurice Poli), leader of the band, insists Riccardo drive them out of the city, while his less controlled confederates - black-gloved, borderline hysterical knifeman Blade (Aldo Caponi) and the hulking, concupiscent /cackling Thirty-two (Luigi Montefiori) - are distracted by the

opportunity to torment and harass the innocent but annoying Maria (Lea Lander).

Despite the specific, immediate precedents, this is an old, old story, familiar not only from 'home invasion' thrillers like **THE DESPERATE HOURS** but - given the on-the-road urgency, more appropriately - from a great many Westerns, especially Budd Boetticher efforts like **RIDE LONESOME** or **THE TALL T**. As in the Boetticher films, grudging respect grows between the controlled leader of the crooks and the cool-under-pressure hero even though both know they will in the end try to kill each other. Their professional kinship is underlined because they are both disgusted by the unnecessary obnoxiousness of the villain's sidekicks. "*When he sees a pair of tits, nothing else matters*" Doc says of Thirty-two (so called because that's his dick-size in centimetres). Riccardo is no Randolph Scott, however, and just keeps his head down, focusing on the kid, while Maria is driven out of her mind by the incessant and extreme pestering. In the end, it has to be Doc who rescues her, taking advantage of a tunnel to shoot Thirty-two, who spends the rest of the film dying even as his former comrades agree to split his share of the loot and dump his body.

Playing out almost in real time and confined to the interior of the car for at least half the film - in that heat, you just know how bad the huge, sweaty Thirty-two must smell even before he's shot - this is very much an exercise in suspense, abetted by a nerve-jangling Stelvio Cipriani score. Oddly, the most composed and Bava-like shot - a silhouette under the credits of a sobbing woman whose identity doesn't become clear until the very last - is the one piece he didn't film. The rest is almost the antithesis of his usual smooth, dreamlike style: inside the car, unobtrusive zooms and pans break up what might have been visual monotony, and the action sequences are shot with a grittier, rougher feel than the maestro tried elsewhere. There is a Hitchcock-style chase through a cornfield, and several potentially or actually explosive encounters with characters who get in the way - an old friend of Riccardo's met in a roadside mini-market, the dozing proprietor of an out-of-the-way garage, an unbearably chatty woman who forces the group to give her a lift, a grape farmer. We are constantly aware of the danger to anyone who intervenes. Like **TWITCH OF THE DEATH NERVE**, this doesn't let us get close to any of the characters: three disposable women hostages are casually killed, Blade and Thirty-two are so

out of control we catch on immediately that Doc should never have relied on them in the first place and Riccardo is ultimately revealed to be just as crooked as his abductors. When they get to the end of the road and Doc orders the murder of the hostages, Riccardo reaches into the child's blanket and pulls out a pistol, then shoots Doc and Blade, with Maria being taken out by a stray spray from Blade's tommy-gun. Though Riccardo has let everyone think the boy is his son, he is actually the kidnapped son of the crying woman from under the credits and the film ends with him making his ransom demands to her over the telephone. In a traditional *giallo*, a twist like this would come out of the blue and the ostensible hero would have been as ingratiating as possible before revealing his true colours, but **RABID DOGS** is so swift and merciless that it hasn't had time for fakery. Like Doc, we've sensed all along the coldness in the mild-seeming driver; the twist is not a betrayal of audience involvement (cf: Kevin Costner in **NO WAY OUT**) but a confirmation that everyone is as rotten as we always thought they were.

Kim Newman

REQUIEM FOR A VAMPIRE
aka **REQUIEM POUR UN VAMPIRE / CAGED VIRGINS /**
DUNGEON OF TERROR
France, 1971

writer/director: **Jean Rollin**
director of photography: **Renan Polles**
editor: **Michel Patient**
music: **Pierre Raph**
producers: **Jean Rollin, Sam Selsky**

cast: **Marie Pierre Castel** (fugitive girl #1), **Mireille D'Argent** (fugitive girl #1), **Phillipe Gasté** (the Great Vampire), **Dominique Louise Dhour**, **Michel Delesalle**, **Antoine Mosin**, **Olivier François**, **Dominique Toussaint**, **Paul Bisciglia**, **Jean-Noel Delamarre**.

Perhaps only a country dominated by Breton and Sartre could have produced a film maker like Jean Rollin. Not, I hasten to add for the sake of purists, that there is much influence of Sartre in his work. But there is a sheer intellectualism to his films, which takes Breton's and

Robbe-Grillet's surrealistic visions to a logical conclusion of misogynistic power and violence. He is most famous for his early vampire films, **LE VIOL DU VAMPIRE** (1967), **LA VAMPIRE NUE** (1969), **LE FRISSON DES VAMPIRES** (1970) and **REQUIEM FOR A VAMPIRE** (1971), and in these, his best films, surrealist/expressionist images dominate with a poetic beauty. Many scenes could be frozen and turned into painted pictures or fantastic posters. The actors however, unlike in most surrealist or expressionist work where they are often filled with violent emotion, are here mere animated mannequins or puppets. I imagine this must be an influence from the great art director of Rollin's generation, Robert Bresson. Unlike Bresson however Rollin is ultimately lazy, lacking the fine attention to detail. He also lacks faith in his own personal vision being strong enough to hold the attention of the audience. Excessive nudity and superfluous sex scenes prevent pictures from becoming what might otherwise be masterpieces. Possibly this is for commercial reasons. Personally I think it more likely to be a projection of Rollin's own mind. Clearly, like Jesus Franco, he thinks that only sex and violence is interesting and that a film without them will be found boring. (What do you mean, so do you? Remember this is supposed to be a *serious* mag!).

The fact that the actors are mere puppets means this film does not suffer much from bad acting. It is difficult to produce an unconvincing character if there is no character. The film works out several repeated Rollin obsessions.

There is no real plot. Two girls dressed as clowns shoot at pursuers in a car chase. The man with them gets shot. They pull off the road. He dies with blood and melodrama. The camera looks out of his eyes as he dies. Two clowns' faces peer down at us, move nearer, look at us and pull back, remaining expressionless. We black out. Our last view of life has been two girls covered in clown make-up. Still, enough of our problems.

The pursuers having passed by, the girls burn the body and car and set off across country. A cornfield. They have established themselves as practical and dangerous and so we are caught by surprise when we next see one of them appearing as a typically French, micro-skirted nymphette in pig-tails in front of a food van. She lures the man into the woods to the accompaniment of the sort of music you get in sex comedies and allows him to grope her long enough to distract him while her friend, also pig-tailed and micro-skirted, steals food from the van. She

pushes him off, hides behind a tree and then makes a face at his retreating back before rejoining her friend.

They walk along the road, hear noises and run into a graveyard. With a flash of white panties one of them falls into an open grave on top of a coffin and gets covered over by earth by two grave diggers who fail to notice her as they return from lunch to fill it in! Luckily her friend saves her just in time and, after changing into clown costumes once again, they walk through the graveyard to arrive at a large castle. They meet some bats on the way which make them open their eyes a bit and show the first signs of weakness. They wander around the castle and then have an entirely gratuitous lesbian love scene on some fur in an alcove.

By this time you know you are watching something different. You haven't a clue what is happening. Nothing is making sense. There has been virtually no dialogue whatsoever, and yet you feel the director has intended it this way. The girls hear a noise and turn into dolly-girls again, but with guns. Their lack of character is confusing as they change from independent women to sex symbols to sex objects and back again. This is a film you are either going to love or be totally bored by.

They explore the castle and come across a medieval scene of cloaked figures at an altar. They turn out to be skeletons, except for one who is playing the organ. This one rises, lifts a candelabra and slowly turns to reveal a middle aged female vampire in period costume with ridiculously long fangs. From now on the medieval scenes in the castle and gothic scenes in the graveyard are handled superbly. The film alternates from modernity at day to gothic at night. Many of the scenes really are nothing less than visual poetry, impossible to describe.

The girls shoot at the vampiress with no effect, run away but are trapped by some brutish men who are clearly regressing back to the caves and nearly raped until a whip-wielding, black leather-clad dominatrix forces them off. She allows them to run into the graveyard where they come to a huge mausoleum. From this, framed in the doorway, hands out to spread his cloak, emerges the classic vampire.

The girls are taken to a Sadean cellar where nude and semi-nude women hanging in chains are molested by the brutish men and long-fanged vampiress. The Gothic medieval atmosphere is caught exactly with none of the crassness that most hard horror directors would put in. The scene is shot through red light, bats flit about and you

see why books on horror and vampires like to include so many stills from his films. The girls, previously hypnotised by the vampire, are de-hypnotised and the first words of real dialogue are spoken. The girls explain preceding events (no more than we know), ending with "*then we got lost.*"

"*More than you know. Eternally lost*", is the reply, but the dialogue is flat and unnatural and the girls take sentences in turns. They are bitten by the vampire and collapse, and there is some now gratuitous woman molestation breaking the carefully contrived atmosphere, then a cut to the next day when the girls wake up on the rug.

The basic plot is that the vampire is dying but attempting to pass on his powers to this small group of followers, for he is the last of the vampires. The followers however are not worthy of this present and are simply becoming brutish, rather than noble and superior like him. In the end, the girls - who are temporarily emotionally split when one becomes initiated and the other not - are saved, and the vampire retreats into the tomb/mausoleum to end "*this illusion of life*", to sleep and eventually die with the nicest vampire, while the others are killed. The long-toothed one sits outside to guard the mausoleum until she dies, her judgement for being evil. You are left with a feeling of high tragedy. The girls go away together as they came, a boyfriend inherited along the way running off, to repeat another Rollin obsession that women are best off together.

So sex, Gothic horror and atmosphere keep Rollin going and girls seldom keep their clothes on for long. He shot his last vampire film **LEVRES DE SANG** in 1975, mixing a vampire story with a ghost story. After **PHANTASME** (1975), which mixed sex with horror in a fairly ordinary 'woman trapped in a house' tale for which he appeared to have no enthusiasm, he made some hardcore porno films of reputedly average quality, before giving in and making one competent zombie film - **LES RAISINS DE LA MORT** (1978) - followed by what were in effect ghost stories.

I think I read somewhere that Jean Rollin is now driving a taxi-cab. I hope this is not true, even if he is an anachronism, a director of the sixties who managed to survive through to the eighties. The problem was perhaps that, at heart, he was not a horror director. It was a genre he became involved and trapped in because of his liking



characteristically beautiful still images from Jean Rollin: top left: REQUIEM FOR A VAMPIRE others: LA ROSE DE FER

for sex and surrealism. He is a competent director - **ZOMBIE LAKE** with a higher budget and the silly bits cut out would make an excellent BBC play. He has made films that will remain classics of the horror genre even if in this country, thanks to the censors, they will be mentioned more in books than actually seen. Though he shows the real root of beautiful surrealistic, sado-masochistic imagery is simply blood and screams, at the end of the day maybe he was just too gentle.

Charlie Philipps

THE ROAD TO FORT ALAMO

aka **LA STRADA PER FORTE ALAMO/ARIZONA BILL**
Italy/France, 1964

Director: **John Old [Mario Bava]**.

Story and screenplay: **Vincent Thomas [Vincenzo Palli-Gicca], Charles Price [Franco Prosperi], Jane Brisbane [Livia Contardi]**.

director of photography: **Bud Third [Ubaldo Terzano]**.

editor: **Wilson Dexter [Mario Serandrei]**.

music: **Piero Umiliani**.

producers: **Achille Piazzi, Pier Luigi Torri**.

Cast: **Ken Clark** (Bud Massedy), **Jany Clair** (Janet), **Michel Lemoine** (Carson), **Andreina Paul** (Mrs Collins), **Kirk Bert [Alberto Cevenini]** ('Slim' Kinaid), **Dean Ardow [Gustavo De Nardo]** (Sgt Warwick/Woolwich), **Anthony Gradwell [Antonio Gradoli]** (Captain Hull), **Gérard Herter** (Mr Silver), **Pietro Tordi** (bartender), **Claudio Ruffini** (gambler).

Clearly, Mario Bava made spaghetti Westerns because everyone else in Italy was cashing in, and he later dismissed his essays in the genre as 'just work'. On this evidence, he was overly generous about his Westerns; this feels like an effort by a man who hasn't bothered to see **A FISTFUL OF DOLLARS** and instead relies on dim memories of 50s Hollywood second feature cowboy movies for inspiration.

The title itself signals just how cheap the picture is: we stay on the road to Fort Alamo because actually getting there would mean building an elaborate set. It opens with the usual dreadful song and a stunningly fake glass shot of towering mesas laid over a stretch of the Appian Way that becomes

very familiar as the characters repeatedly ride past the same ridge. The period is the Civil War, and we are out West where non-aligned Arizona Bill (Ken Clark) wanders the wilderness after his ranch was sacked and his sister shot by the Union Army (who have left him an I.O.U.) while he was away. Bill comes across a massacred troop of cavalry and deduces that the Ossage Indians are on the warpath. He also finds an order on a dying soldier which, when handed over to a bank, will requisition a large cash sum for an army payroll.

Arriving for breakfast in a nearby town, Bill rescues mug punter Slim from a crooked all-night poker game (the bartender barely wakes up for the fight) and adopts him as a happy go-lucky sidekick. Bill and Slim hook up with an outlaw band headed by the sadistic Carson to steal uniforms from the dead soldiers, not forgetting to ride past that ridge again, and head for the nearest bank to cash in on the requisition order. The hand-over seems to be going well until, in the film's most startling (if comical) moment, the scurvy Carson runs the act by gunning down a nosy little old lady who is in the queue. Since Bill and Slim complain, they are coshed and left to the Ossages, who stake them out in the road. Along comes a real detachment of Cavalry, on the road to Fort Alamo (just past this ridge) with a consignment of womenfolks and children. Bill and Slim, in uniform, join the column, which is commanded by a gung ho idiot whose role seems to have been cut down, but also includes a wily sergeant with a pipe and grey hair dye at his temples who twigs that Bill isn't a proper army officer because he claims to have been to Annapolis Naval Academy (or 'Police Academy' as the NFT's earphone commentary lady had it). Bill romances Janet (Jany Clair), a woman under arrest for killing a soldier who tried to molest her, and who should turn up fleeing the Indians but Carson, who has to pretend to be a soldier too.

The rest of the film is vaguely derived from **STAGECOACH**, with the Indians harrying the party as they struggle towards Fort Alamo. Carson treacherously kills Slim but gets his during the final assault after a fist-fight with Bill on top of the ridge, and there's one neat trick whereby the Ossages lure soldiers out into the river by making little rafts loaded with thick wads of the stolen money and floating them past the defence positions, potting the greedy cavalymen as they paddle out to grab the cash. The last five minutes are exactly derived from **STAGECOACH**: a mother is about to shoot her child to save her from the savages when the bugle call announces that

cavalry reinforcements are on the way and, after the Indians have been seen off, the sergeant allows outlaws Bill and Janet to escape to a happy ending.

Bava's involvement seems to extend to his trademarked use of orange and blue light gels for several scenes in caves (the outlaw hide-out, a camp for the cavalry), but precious little else captures his interest. Arizona Bill (perhaps an echo of Arizona Jim, the cowboy hero of the pulp magazine in Jean Renoir's *LE CRIME DE M. LANGE*) has potential as a cynical hero on the Josey Wales model, but Clark (star also of Bava's disputed *NEBRASKA IL PISTOLERO/SAVAGE GRINGO*) is a muscular plank who might as well be Maciste in a cowboy hat and isn't capable of any depth at all, though he takes the trouble to remove his shirt several times. The rest of the cast aren't up to much, either. Some entertainment can be derived from the anglicised credits: Bava again signs himself 'John Old', but rather more endearing are cameraman Bud Third (Ubaldo Terzano) and hairdresser Mary Gang (Marisa Laganga), not to mention crewperson Cathy Caterer and supporting actor Kirk Bert. Rather more familiar are assistant director/co-writer Charles Price and art director Demos Philos, who turn out to be our old friends Franco Prosperi and Demofilo Fidani.

Kim Newman

ROBAK

aka *THE WORM*

Poland, 1988. 24mins. b/w

director: Mariusz Grzegorzek

screenplay: Mariusz Grzegorzek

from the works of Fyodor Sologub

director of photography: Andrzej Musial

editor: Barbara Snarska

music: Dead Can Dance

producers: Wojciech J. Has, Henryk Ryszka, Witold Sobocinski, Jerzy Wojcik

cast: Krystyna Tkacz, Boguslaw Sochnack, Agnieszka Grochoka, Anna Sliwka, Jolanta Wolska.

An interesting student short from Poland, shot in a style redolent of German Expressionism and the work of Carl Dreyer; like Dreyer's *VAMPYR* (1931) some of *ROBAK*

looks as though it was shot through gauze, though this could just be down to the film-makers using old B/W film stock! Be that as it may, this is a dreamlike work, carrying a lingering feeling of despair and fear.

The events portrayed appear to take place over the course of a few days and nights, depicting the final (?) hours of a young girl's life in a grim house referred to at one point as an 'establishment' (an orphanage?). The central character is Zhenia, a timid, pretty child about 13/14 years old. The film opens during a game of hide and seek between Zhenia and two other children, a fat and lumpy girl and a smarmy boy who may be siblings, and to whom Zhenia doesn't seem to be related. During the game, which is shot in slow motion (as is much of the film), Zhenia breaks a cup, the favourite of the much feared master of the house. In a tense scene this tyrant summons the unfortunate Zhenia for a whipping that is to be carried out in front of the other children; "*What have you done, chicken-face?*", he sneers. At the sight of the riding crop being brought forth from a drawer Zhenia screams and flees the room. Once again the film goes into slow motion as Zhenia backs in terror down a dark staircase, her tormentor's face peering and leering at her from the top. "*At night the Worm will creep down your throat, the Worm will slither down your tongue, devour your flesh, drink all your life's blood...*", he intones, as the camera focuses in extreme close-up on Zhenia's pale, frightened face. Eerie religious plainchant fills the air as blood slowly, inexplicably, begins to trickle down her forehead. The scene shifts to the children's bedroom, as the camera pans over the bedclothes, revealing wide eyes peering over the blankets as clocks chime in the background; there is a scream of terror from Zhenia. "*She dreamt of the Worm*" says one of the other children gathered round her bed. The lady of the house reassures the frightened child that there is no such creature, that it was "*...only a joke*".

Next, the five of them cluster round a table for a meal. Zhenia cannot bring herself to eat. The others start to laugh at her, a grotesque sight and sound, especially the staccato whinnying made by the fat girl which echoes on the soundtrack; this is a disturbing scene, made even more effective by Zhenia joining in the humour at her own expense. The others stop but she can't, she appears almost hysterical. "*Wipe that grin off your face, stupid girl*", snarls the master of the house, "*The worm lurks inside until it is nice and warm, and he'll start sucking at any moment...*", he laughs before continuing, "*...then you'll bleat like a sheep*." Zhenia isn't laughing any

more, she bows her head in silence as everyone stares at her. Now the camera moves slowly through lace curtains to show Zhenia advancing towards the foreground, as a Polish song based on the 'Daes Israe' booms on the soundtrack. A gust of wind blows her hair away from her impassive features. In the most powerful and poetic moment in the whole film Zhenia kneels in prayer, spotlit by a stream of light from an opened door, her back to the camera, as her shadow pours away behind her; a large dog runs past her in slow motion, exiting through the glowing doorway as Zhenia crumples to the ground. At this point things get a bit confusing, but it appears that Zhenia is ill, perhaps even dying. The others gather around her bed, and the woman of the house wipes Zhenia's feverish brow with a flannel. The child's outflung, dangling hand drips sweat, (or is it blood?)... Her eyes slowly close... Abruptly there is a flashback/vision of Zhenia being forced by an unseen assailant face down onto a bed, her hair matted with sweat, features contorted with pain and fear as her face is buried in her pillow. The implication (borne out by much of the film's imagery) is that Zhenia has been brutally abused, and one doesn't need to be a psychologist to understand the Freudian significance of Zhenia's 'worm'...

The final images of the film are a sobering collage of found footage of refugee children, war orphans and swollen bellied African tots, this sequence culminating in the poignant sight (possibly taken from Warsaw ghetto footage) of a small boy dancing in the street, turning to smile at the camera as the frame freezes; Zhenia's suffering is seen to be merely one of the day-to-day horrors visited on the world's children, part of an unstoppable cycle of cruelty, neglect and murder...

ROBAK is a bleak and icy tone poem of a film, chilling stuff indeed. For a small scale production it is remarkable; the cast are never less than professional, and the girl acting Zhenia is particularly good and thoroughly convincing. Grzegorzek is a director of no little talent if this arty, disturbing and obscure short is anything to go by, and is a further example of the untapped and largely unknown talent that exists well outside the limited creative borders set by the increasingly inane and sickeningly influential Hollywood blockbusters.

Nigel Burrell

Addendum: Mariusz Grzegorzek has directed an Ian McEwan adaptation, **ROZMOWA Z CZŁOWIEKIEM Z**

SZAFY / CONVERSATION WITH A CUPBOARD MAN (1993): *"A single mother shelters her only child from the outside world to the point where he develops no social skills. Although this creates a number of complications, the real trouble starts during the boy's mid-teens, the sexual tension between him and mom driving the latter into marriage. Unaccepting of "dad," our hero finds himself shipped off to an institution. Once released, an abusive employer pushes the lad to his limit. A peculiar, very dark film, literally and figuratively speaking."* (from the press release).

LA ROSE DE FER

aka **LA NUIT DE LA CIMETIERE / THE CRYSTAL ROSE**
France, 1972

writer/director: **Jean Rollin**

director of photography: **Jean-Jacques Renon**

editor: **Michel Patient**

music: **Pierre Raph**

producers: **Jean Rollin, Sam Selsky, Pierre Letovsky**

cast: **Françoise Pascal & Pierre Dupont (Hugues Quester)**
(the lovers), **Mireille Dargent, Nathalie Perrey, Jean Rollin.**

"I love this film very much. It is definitely one of my most personal efforts." - Jean Rollin to Peter Blumenstock in *Video Watchdog*.

LA ROSE DE FER, (literally 'The Iron Rose'), is possibly Jean Rollin's most rambling, poetic and visually haunting film to date, as he presents the viewer with a barrage of bizarre imagery at the expense of coherent plotting (plus ca change, eh?) ; the end result is a not displeasing hallucinatory excursion into a dreamscape of morbid sex and the supernatural. As with many of his other films from the 1970s, Rollin condenses the narrative into one night and, with a few brief exceptions, the entire film is set within the high walls of an old cemetery. The two central protagonists are the attractive Françoise 'Mind Your Language' Pascal, and Pierre Dupont, who plays her boyfriend. Rollin focusses his attention on these two, but throws in some tongue-in-cheek distractions in the form of a sinister monk, a man caped like a gothic vampire, and a girl dressed like a clown who places flowers on another clown's grave! (it is intriguing to note the important place that clowns hold in Rollin's cinematic iconography, they appear again and again in his films; Rollin told me recently "Clowns interest me. If there is

a clown not in a circus...") The print I watched was in its native tongue, but luckily the dialogue in **LA ROSE DE FER** is minimal, and subsequently my schoolboy French wasn't unduly taxed!

The film opens on a cold, bleak beach, seemingly early in the morning. Pascal picks an object out of the foaming surf; it is a wrought-iron rose, exquisitely formed, complete with leaves and stem. She examines it and throws it back into the water. The title and credits roll as Pascal walks across misty fields, and embraces Dupont on the front of an old steam locomotive in a marshalling yard. Cut to the wedding scenes, dancing, drinking and Gallic jollity. Pascal and Dupont then decide for a reason I could not decipher to go for a picnic (sorry, make that 'pique-nique'!) in the local graveyard; well, doesn't everyone? Having entered through the daunting high steel gates they wander around, whilst the viewer is shown other visitors to the cemetery, including the aforementioned oddballs. The cemetery is real, not some dodgy sub-Hammer set, and Rollin makes full use of the old, overgrown tombstones, and eerie statuary, imbuing them with a grim poetry and understated menace. (Interestingly, Rollin originally had the wonderfully Magritte-esque notion of having a half-buried steam locomotive in the middle of the already surreal cemetery, but sadly this proved an impractical idea).

The tone of **LA ROSE DE FER** becomes even more morbid when the couple descend into an underground burial vault and make love; surprisingly for a Rollin film of this era he does not show a great deal of nudity in this scene, leaving fans of the delectable Pascal feeling a bit cheated! Whilst they are thus engaged in the bowls of the earth, night falls. Unbeknownst to them the gates have been locked for the night, as the walls that surround the cemetery are too high to scale. It is from this point on that events take an increasingly bizarre turn for the worse as far as Pascal and her lover are concerned. They wander around aimlessly, bickering, fighting and committing acts of minor desecration; remember, this is a real graveyard, so the scenes of crosses and statues being toppled carry a potent charge. The sexual tension between the pair threatens to explode, and the night air crackles with suppressed violence. Rollin sends his gothic imagery into overdrive with scenes of coffins being opened in crypts, and Pascal and Dupont fucking in an opened grave on top of skeletal remains. A strange mood possesses Pascal; she poses with a human skull held in front of her face, unnerving both her boyfriend and the viewer.

Finding the iron rose from the film's opening, she caresses her cheek with it, her expression dreamily detached, Pascal breaks into laughter, and Dupont is alarmed to see an unknown woman's face peering over the tombstones at him, and to discover a blazing wreath of roses on the ground. In a cutaway scene Pascal prances around naked (at last!) on the beach, pushing over metal crosses... Dupont is shut up in the underground vault, Pascal carefully placing the metal rose over the bolted trapdoor, and he apparently dies. Pascal then dances till dawn (really!), cavorting about the graves, caressing the statues of angels and cherubs. The sun rises, she goes back to the vault in which she has entombed her boyfriend, opens up the trapdoor, holds herself in suspension above the entrance to the shaft and casually drops to her death, the trap slamming shut after her; an old woman, also seen the previous evening in the graveyard, places a wreath of flowers on the trapdoor. End of film.

'But what does it all mean?', I hear you crying... A pox on interpretation, who cares? The power of **LA ROSE DE FER** lies as much as anything else in its apparent formlessness, and some of its abstract images haunt one long after the film has unspooled. No doubt an English-subtitled print would enable one to glean further insights into the haunting complexity of this delightfully understated 'Rollinade'. However, even if your French is as limited as mine you will be certain to enjoy the exquisitely creepy visuals of this, Rollin's poetic and surrealistic *tour de force*.

Nigel Burrell

THE SADIST OF NOTRE DAME

aka **DEMONIAC**

France/Spain, 1979

director: **Jess Franco**

screenplay: **Ilona Kunesova, A.L. Mariaux [Marius Lesoeur], Jeff Manor [Jesus Franco]**

director of photography: **Raymond Heil**

music: **Daniel White**

producers: **Marius Lesoeur, Daniel Lesoeur**

cast: **Jess Franck [Jesus Franco] (Mathis Vogel), Rosa Almiral [Lina Romay] (Anna), Nadine Pascal, France Nicolas (The Countess), Pierre Taylou [Pierre De Franval] (Raymond Franval), Olivier Mathot (Inspector Tanner),**

Francoise Goussard [Françoise Blanchard], Yul Sanders [Claude Boisson], Monica Swinne [Monica Swinn] (Maria, the Count's Partner), Carole Riviere [Caroline Rivière] (Gina, the Nightclub Girl).

Spanish horror - and Franco product in particular - seems dogged by the clamour for the 'original' film from which this or that version may have been culled. This ever-present irritation is not aided by paella-practitioners' different deal of sex and violence to their Italian counterparts. For whatever clutch of reasons (including censorship hangovers and Spain's more rigid and sexually psychotic Catholicism), Iberian grue is not fashioned to make the same visceral and kinetic demands upon its audience as the extremities of Roman gore. As any Naschy devotee will admit, Spanish violence is far more static in its effect, is less involving, less penetrative, more surface, than its *giallo* equivalent, and does wrenchingly far less to counter the appeals of sheeny female flesh abounding in exploitation fare than the Italian beauty killers. For those demanding maximum versions delivering maximum shock, an absence of searing red meat may have one believing that there's always a bigger and bloodier film somewhere that got away, but for those that accept this alternate approach (and a selectively geographic identification of filmstuff), horror product of a Spanish sensibility can offer a unique probing into the nature of the erotic, and the problematic area of acceptable and illegitimate hetero-powered attractions.

Jesus Franco of course, is the genre S&M practitioner. **THE SADIST OF NOTRE DAME**, a 1979 re-editing with additions of his 1974 French hardcore **EXORCISMES ET MESSES NOIRES / EXORCISM**, is a confrontational examination of horror-erotica's guilty dawdlings, and an intestinal contemplation of Franco's own dirtied repetitions, both within and without his native Spain. In other words, **THE SADIST OF NOTRE DAME** is a vital and viperous central text in the Franco filmography.

The director 'stars' (if anyone can shine celestial in such seedy product as this) as excommunicated almost-priest and sometime asylum-dweller Mathis Vogel (not deformed as some sources state, unless stubbornness is a crime). He has proved himself too extreme for the church, and now paces the streets of Paris to knife those women he deems impure, from prostitutes to dowdy disco-dancers. Sexual impropriety sullies their souls, so murder is an act of sanctity, a freeing of clean feminine spirits from dirtily indulgent

sexual bodies. Problem is though, carnal impurity is measured by the strength of lust Vogel feels for potential victims; realising that his saintly mission may actually be a rather more selfish sado-masochistic indulgence (hinted at in the opening murder of a cruising prostitute and expanded upon in every succeeding kill, even more explicit of course in the Eurociné source film), he returns on occasion to the Cathedral of Notre Dame to gain some kind of pardon or legitimisation from Raymond, a priest he knew from seminary school. The French Catholics hail homicide quite unacceptable, so sweaty Mathis then attempts to create a new justification for psychopathy by turning his crusade into melodramas for the local whip-rag "The Dagger and The Garter". The result is a strange two-part piece, not fiction, but the truth, (as he assures editor Pierre de Franval and kinky sex-sec', Ann), entitled "Return of the Grand Inquisitor". Of course, such contacts also give him *entrée* into a whole new unforgiveable circle of sin, and with crazy casual stealth he enters the mansion of local aristos Count Dicken (!) and wife to witness a ticket-only orgy vestibuled by extreme S&M/satanist stagershows ("Dagger and Garter" specials). Eventually, after killings that climax with that of D&G's Ann (a moment of intense and near FX-less sleaze, spurred by the erotic fixation he has developed for the woman), he disrupts a final orgy. The international police who have been so poorly on his tail throughout close in, and humanitarian guilt, swaddled sexual desire and psychotic nether-worldly beliefs collide to have him offer himself to the mercy of the legitimate church and the law, back at the dawn-lit cathedral.

As film-makers like John Waters have more pantomimically revealed, the anarchy that the erotic or perverse can offer is that traditionally sexual areas such as the pudenda of the eligible opposite sex can lose their dominance as erogenous zones; untrammelled sexuality, loosed of society's strictures, has the potential to remove definition from our bodies so that they become a riot of sexual possibility. Erotica can offer two paths: one of freedom and personal creativity, the other of the most oppressive meaninglessness (porn can get so bloody boring). One of the optimism of the '60s was that the permissive could break down square-head definition so that suddenly all kinds of people can become attractive in any situation. (The problem with this sexual revolution was that it also blueprints a masculinist rape mentality). **THE SADIST**'s Paris is one in which sexual encounters can explode at any time (in an

automobile, in a magazine office, in a bar that was once a church), where Vogel's contrary collision of desires and duties becomes a battle to define himself. His D&G contributions become a way to have others see him as he himself does, to read about him in his own words..

Central to this project is the breaking up of the aristocracy by his stabbing of Rose, the third party in Ann and Pierre's sleaze trinity and the dominatrix who is about to sacrifice a bound/crucified nubile, for guests at the party to get off on. Vogel claims death is a freeing of the soul from the body: he tells the unfortunate prostitute who picks him up at the start of the movie that Notre Dame, emblematic of the spiritual life, is a tomb for our flesh, and wishes that he himself lived in one of its towers (recalling the twisted hunchback, desired by no-one). For the upper-crust orgiast however, death, scarred torsos and desire converge in a devilish big hard-on, a paradox Vogel must try to eliminate. He cuts Rose's throat and saves the day for the constrained victim, spoiling some elitist fun, but we still aren't convinced he's much of a hero.

The Church would have us a single spiritual self, not just a mess of desires and drives, and despite his single-mindedness Vogel is no good at this Cyclopean self-depiction: the police know him by other names (the Swiss Interpol agent refers to him as Laforgue), he is mistaken for a street-bum and lies continually to his victims about how he lives his life. And of course, the D&G readers, searching for 'strange emotions' (as Ann says), would not for a minute believe that his sordid melodramas were the product of a soulful man, rather they come from the pen of a compatriot. Vogel's murders proceed with more and more verve, until the ecstatic killing of Ann, her splayed incarceration a near-exact copy of the orgy sacrifices, blade and ritual wielded by Vogel in what transpires to be some of the ugliest anti-religiousness you'll ever see.

Many antagonistic to Franco would see such a complex mapping of motivations as difficult to fathom given Jess's chosen technical 'inarticulacy'. Scenes are disparate - the Dicken-orgies hardly cohering with the rest of the film's city action (one effect of the patchwork approach to **THE SADIST**'s making), the script wavering from Vogel's apocalypse through weird comedy (a police-station complaint about a murdered dog) to some absolutely awful exchanges between the two cops Rocher and Malou. Other scenes, such as the pre-credits sequence of Mathis observing the Parisian dustbinmen remain stubbornly enigmatic, but these cellu-

loid aberrations only serve to give a structural impression of Vogel's manically-logicked brimstone madness (one of the first things we see is the priest's eye, as if the rest of the film is his vision), as well as creating a more general sense of hazy indefinability such as haunts all things erotic. In only partially cohesive fashion, **THE SADIST** has naked bodies tied up, strapped down, privacy and pudenda invaded by some crudely voyeuristic camerawork (and by such as Franco's tongue in the hardcore version) to make distaff flesh ever more exhibitionistically and isolatedly sexual, ignoring the attractions of beauty for the more uncontrollable drives of desire.

For the viewer as well as for Vogel, **THE SADIST OF NOTRE DAME** opens up many forbidden areas of heterosexual lust, where the orgy scenes once more become essential. "Dagger and Garter" co-eds talk so casually about sexy sacrifice that the viewer is not really certain if they mean to actually kill the hired virgins/prostitutes or not (for the permissive procurers of Paris there is no distinction). In one hotel-room discussion between lesbian-loving Ann and Rosie, the sacrificial stabs they predict for the session could either be knife-thrusts or penile-lusts, and we're never quite sure whether the Countess of Decamps herself wishes to stage a real Black Mass or just a bourgeois pretence for the sake of a trembling turn-on (when Vogel does her in, it finally appears that he is the most committedly perverse). When they do come, the ritual scenes are edited in an exaggeratedly Iberian manner, retaining all the bound actress's fleshy appeal whilst she has just, apparently, been stabbed in the vagina (the only real sign of death is the blood trickling down her breasts). These scenes recall the humid imaginings of the Marquis De Sade from the marvelous pre-credits sequence of Franco's **JUSTINE** (1968). Unlike some of the Vogel killings, we are deprived the sexually chastening shock of seeing blade into flesh, and a dangerously necrophiliac pulse results, offered in a far more direct and dirtied up way than in Franco's earlier and more poetic image-incarnations of erotic death (such as **NECROMICON** (1967) and **VENUS IN FURS** (1969)). The necrophiliac urge is not simply sensationalism or the final logic of anonymous sexual encounter (a corpse has no character, the ideal one-night stand), but is also a moment of great troublesome truth.

Ask any for whom hunger or pain are everyday experiences, and they'll be the first to tell you that our frail and ever-decaying body is more excruciatingly part of us than

we'd care to realise (patronising? I know...) This begs the question of what are we really besides flesh, or is there any spiritual life beyond the body at all? The only time we healthy modern folk have cause to pay our meat much attention is at moments of sensual pleasure, where desire is so strong that our bodies are at one with ourselves. Suddenly, our crotch-gazing daze can break down into a notion of pain and death as our only end. Sex and annihilation join, something the Church, with its manipulations of chastity and marriage, seeks to bypass. The seeds of religion's sexual insanity are there to be nurtured by such as Mathis, and in the crazily perverse manner that marks Franco's work, Vogel's greatest crime is a skewed and disconcerting honesty, a churchman's revelation of the truth of Catholic fixation, awarding necrophilia an awful apocalyptic legitimacy.

There is perhaps someone more honest still than Mathis Vogel, one who has avoided Vogel's ruinous embrace of church hypocrisy, who admits more than any would like about the nature of desire in his public actions. I mean, of course, Jesus (!) Franco himself. **THE SADIST**'s street-grimed reality - a peeing tramp splashes the film's start, Marturo, another vagrant, is in on the action as the police close in at the climax - pushes the audience to view it as closer to actual life than Jess's more delirious and surreal works, and as the film proceeds Franco and Vogel become more and more inseparable. Franco absconded from Spain to make freer films, Vogel is a stranger in Paris (outrageously, Vogel characterises himself as a modern Spanish Inquisition); Vogel writes about himself as Mathis Laforgue, Franco has also been that sensationalist semi-autobiographic pulp writer; as Vogel tortures Ann, the woman he loves, Franco is doing exactly the same to his wife Rosa Almira (aka Lina Romay); and perhaps most astonishingly, whilst Vogel is murdering an abducted gogo prostitute atop his mother's bed with incestuous undertow ("*My mother died in this bed*"), Franco is sexually assaulting Caroline Riviere, the actual daughter of his second wife Nicole Guettard (credit to Tim Lucas's invaluable Franco articles for this unveiling). Fantasy and reality collide.

With a marked lack of costume (Almira wears a big cloak surely carried over from other roles, Franco just seems to wear his day clothes, many just wear their skin), unaesthetic photography, jarring music, verité street and dancehall scenes, reality is queasily stressed, and the only differ-

ence between Franco and Vogel is that Vogel is a hypocrite with psychopathy resultant whilst Franco is an honest man who has embraced images, not idols, admitting and enacting sensual truths rather than denying and destroying through them.

When the police pathologist comes to the hotel to examine the bodies of the Countess and her lover, he is jokingly accused of the murder, and quips that the first he'd kill would be his wife. An upright man, a little like a priest, how far is this doctor from the scrambled explosion of realities that Vogel is? Count Dicken neither partakes nor undresses at the parties he pays for; he gets his thrills from being ordered to do so, like he has no choice, later on. The police themselves have little interest in punishing the S&M abuses of the Chateau Decamps, even though much is tacitly known of these behind-closed-doors antics; Vogel is the target because his half-disclosed drives are so way out in the open. Like good Christians in church - like the good art-house crowd who'd mostly frown on Franco product - the line-towers who wish to get on in life look, and stay *stumm*, never admitting the unhappy truths and hidden pulses of desire. Franco's daring admission, played out so harshly in **THE SADIST OF NOTRE DAME**, is that for him - and maybe for us too - there can afford to be no secrets.

David Prothero

<SAFE>

USA 1995

writer/director: **Todd Haynes**

director of photography: **Alex Nepomniashchy**

editor: **James Lyons**

music: **Ed Tomney, Brendan Dolan**

producers: **Christine Vachon, Lauren Zalaznick**

cast: **Julianne Moore** (Carol White), **Xander Berkeley** (Greg White), **Peter Friedman** (Peter Dunning), **Susan Norman** (Linda), **Kate McGregor Stewart** (Claire), **Mary Carver** (Nell), **Steven Gilborn** (Dr. Hubbard), **April Grace** (Susan), **Peter Crombie** (Dr. Reynolds), **Ronnie Farer** (Barbara), **Jodie Markell** (Anita), **Lorna Scott** (Marilyn), **James LeGros** (Chris).

Todd Haynes eludes the confines of the 'new queer cinema' with this cool, controlled work about an affluent

woman's disintegration, as '20th Century Disease' - a form of total allergy syndrome - grips her body (or is it her mind?). Carol White is a wealthy, aimless housewife, vegetating in a California purgatory; 'open-plan living, bungalow ranch-style'. Life appears stable but uninspiring and Carol indifferently merges with her surroundings. Her husband - like the one in Robert Altman's **IMAGES** - is not particularly callous or mean (too easy an explanation for female alienation): nonetheless the couple seem to exist on separate planes, where even the expression of concern for the other is encapsulated and numb. Slowly Carol starts to look ill at ease with her position in this suffocating aquarium of affluence. A visit to the hairdressers, the dry-cleaners and occasional drives on the freeway begin to exert a stressful, inexplicably disturbing influence on her behavior. Vomiting, respiratory trauma and nose-bleeds point to some form of illness, but doctors can find nothing 'wrong' with her, and attempts to respond with special diets (recommended by female friends) merely compound the problem. Carol sees a flyer pinned to the noticeboard of a clinic advertising a New Age health retreat, the Wrenwood Commune, located far from the city in the heart of the Texan desert, and checks in there. The 'patients' are issued with oxygen cylinders and exhorted to participate in group discussions about their condition. But the quasi-mystical regime of Wrenwood merely accelerates Carol's illness...

After the contrived, sophomoric **POISON**, I had no taste for Haynes and considered him trapped - along with the even less compelling Greg Araki - in a post-modern film-studies limbo of new wave queerism. It took me a while to check out **<SAFE>** as a result of this scepticism, which proved to be my loss. Intensely cinematic without being too arch in design, this must look great on a big screen, preferably in a cinema where the air-conditioning is jammed on maximum chill.

What's striking about the film is the way that its genre qualities have been absorbed into a seamless piece of drama. At times it's a horror story, albeit one caught frozen in a sideways glance. We're talking horror *vacui* here - enigmatic unease and creeping morbidity rather than confrontation of a visceral taboo. Cronenbergian through disposition rather than aspiration, Haynes seems to have learned something from the Canadian that results in a tonal shading rather than the venerable proliferation of his graphic motifs (think **STEREO** and **CRIMES OF THE FUTURE** for the visuals and **DEAD RINGERS** for the

psychological acuity). It's also a comedy that holds its fire until you're spooked by the possibility it's meant to be serious. Deadpan as a Kraftwerk song, it reserves its ironies in a distinctly unpopulist way, making the moments that do erupt into mirth something of a paranoid's relief. Even then, the film's slyness leaves question-marks dangling over scenes that may or may not be comedic. The delivery of a wrongly coloured sofa in the early scenes could be the (absurd) trigger for Carol's illness; or it could merely be shorthand for her previously humdrum materialist lifestyle. **<SAFE>** is a sci-fi tale too, in the dystopian, future-now vein, but one that neither embraces nor rejects the technological culture that so traumatizes Carol. And by no means least, it's a character study degree zero, zooming in on a woman who constantly deflects, ignores, evades or just blanks any attempt to reach her suspect interiority.

Carol is in every scene, but the film's peculiar unease is generated by the absence of a centre. She defies identification by exhibiting zero 'growth' (itself a West Coast buzzword of course). She only ever seems to *be* when she develops her condition; there's nothing else. Yet her condition is a de-escalating retrograde spiral to nothingness, the void. Having retreated from the city to the country, she grows ever more sensitive to 'pollution' (which by now is taking on metaphysical dimensions). The Texas commune is situated in desert hills far from the highways; but after wandering away from the 'safe' environ to the nearest road (mothlike?) she protests that her sleeping chamber faces the poisonous road, and then exhibits an even more exaggerated sensitivity to the toxic quality of modern life. Carol is obsessed with her new sensitivity, a princess-and-the-pea junky, and as with all obsessions, enough is never enough. Carol can't even feel 'safe' at this remove, and starts to covet the commune's ultimate sanctuary - a porcelain igloo.

One of the film's scariest scenes comes when Carol is presented with a surprise birthday cake and pressured to make a speech. Once the stammering and nerves have been displayed and accounted for, her 'speech' shows nothing underneath - the words are a jumble of previously heard fragments, reiterations of terms from her fellow patients 'therapy disclosures', and repetitions ("*we need to be more aware*") of things she'd said *before* entering the New Age hideaway. Earlier, her glib West-Coast guru had pontificated that words are meant only to take us to the

truth. Perhaps, but if so the only truth that can be accessed is a frightening emptiness, a black hole where language is chopped up, mixed around like a 'technicolor yawn'.

In clumsier hands, this film would have ended up a garish satire on New Age mysticism and bourgeois alienation, the sort of movie Ken Russell might have made a pig's ear of. The second half offers ample opportunity to ridicule a fairly easy target - hippy mumbo-jumbo, prattish Californian belief-tourists with their grubby little crystals, and zinzeridee peddlers bluffing their way through mystic 'encounter groups'. Haynes spares the holistic Wrenwood Commune the more obvious blunderbussing and instead allows creepiness to accumulate alongside brief moments of bathos, as we observe the characters' 'spiritual' floundering.

There are echoes of **THE STEPFORD WIVES** here, although Ira Levin's spiky little satire plays an open hand compared to <**SAFE**>. More compellingly, I'm reminded of George Romero's under-rated curio **SEASON OF THE WITCH**, in which a similarly alienated housewife seeks 'empowerment' through an engagement with mysticism. Bearing in mind Haynes's forthcoming project, the art-school/glam-rock extravaganza **VELVET GOLDMINE**, a pertinent line can also be drawn to the ironic detachment of Roxy Music, that most arch and fantastical band of the seventies. In particular, Haynes seems to have cultivated the ambience of their song "*In Every Dream Home A Heartache*", a mesmerizing study of the emptiness at the heart of consumerism, showcasing one of Bryan Ferry's most chilling vocal performances. Ferry was always both swooningly attracted and bitterly repelled by the glamour of wealth and status, often documenting the terrible vacuum around which millionaires, starlets and sleazy high-lifers revolved. "...*Dream Home*..." darkened Ferry's balladeering romanticism by having his doomed narrator serenading a blow-up sex doll, the ultimate life accessory. Here, perhaps as a result of the director's sexuality, the 'blow-up doll' is liberated from the anguished gaze of a male suitor and sent on a plastic journey of self-discovery... only to demonstrate that, as Ferry wrote in Roxy's *Mother of Pearl*, "*if you're looking for love in a looking glass world it's pretty hard to find*".

Stephen Thrower

Addendum: **VELVET GOLDMINE** eventually appeared in 1999 and scuppered my hopes of a gradually improving

career for this director. Centred around fantasy sexual liaisons between thinly veiled versions of David Bowie and Iggy Pop, this sprawling miscalculation sank under the weight of its poor performances and heavy-handed gay interest. Great title sequence set to an early Brian Eno song, some passable Roxy Music cover versions by members of Radiohead, but little else. His latest is the massively overhyped **FAR FROM HEAVEN**, a melodrama in the style of those by 50s 'women's picture' specialist Douglas Sirk, shot by Edward Lachman, who lensed the similarly 50s-inflected **UNION CITY** in 1980 for Marcus Reichert.

SHOCK TREATMENT

aka **TRAITEMENT DE CHOC/**

L'UOMO CHE UCCIDEVA A SANGUE FREDDO/

DOCTOR IN THE NUDE

France/Italy, 1972

writer/director: **Alain Jessua**

director of photography **Jacques Robin**

editor: **Helene Plemianikov**

music: **René Koering, Alain Jessua**

producers: **Raymond Danon, Jacques Dorfmann, René Thevenet, Alain Belmondo**

cast: **Alain Delon** (Dr Devilers), **Annie Girardot** (Hélène Masson), **Michel Duchaussoy** (Dr Bernard), **Robert Hirsch** (Jerome Savignat), **Jean-François Calvé** (René Gassin), **Guy Saint-Jean, Robert Party, Roger Muni, Jean Raynal, Lucienne Legrand.**

Alain Jessua's science-fiction/horror film, ignominiously re-titled **DOCTOR IN THE NUDE** on its release here, is a startling and under-appreciated film which operates skillfully in the grey area between art and genre cinema. Like many such hybrids it failed to really find an audience and currently languishes in obscurity. Hélène Masson is a wealthy but depressed novelist experiencing a mid-life crisis who takes up the offer to attend an exclusive health clinic. Entering this stark hermetic world, she discovers a conspiracy lurking beneath the clinic's apparently squeaky clean therapeutic order. The staff are concealing a terrible secret, one which the rich patients soon come to accept as they grow increasingly dependant on the rejuvenating

treatment. What then is the connection between the increased vitality of the patients and the exhaustion of the compliant, financially desperate Portuguese youths who work there?

It doesn't take long before the hints of vampirism become explicit, but Jessua rings the changes by having his wealthy leeches flap around the clinic dressed in white gowns, and engaging in a regime of treatment which concentrates obsessively on cleanliness and water as well as blood. Regular immersion is the order of the day at the coastal retreat, with highly unvampish scenes of naked businessmen cavorting in the sea as waves crash over them. The wickedness of these rich bloodsuckers is communicated without the script getting too didactic about things, but the masonic parallels and social metaphors make clear Jessua's leftist critique of capitalist exploitation.

The film shares ideas with a few better known horrors, including several later ones like **THE STEPFORD WIVES** (women's vulnerability to the blandishments of consumer health imagery) and Pasolini's **SALÒ** (with its parade of passive, victimized youths literally stripped of their resources by the decadent rich). The inclusion of Jerome, a homosexual character who is Helène's only reliable friend at the clinic recalls Polanski's **ROSEMARY'S BABY**. He is murdered by the sinister cabal (like Rosemary's friend Hutch), and his death leaves Helen even more isolated. The constant surveillance and attempts to induct Helen into the conspiracy also feel like variations on Patrick McGoochan's TV masterpiece *The Prisoner*.

Helen gets an acute and moving speech about the fear of aging, which lends her temptation to accept the 'treatment' a sympathetic slant, but if the film has a flaw it's that this element fails to gel with the political allegory. Nonetheless **TRAITEMENT DE CHOC** is a great piece of French fantastic cinema, brimming with style and strange ideas, and boasting a gruesome, high-impact ending. It's a shame it's so rarely seen in cinemas, as Jessua is clearly a visually inspired director: the film's brand of scientific vampirism and its cold, alienated mood would make a good double bill with Cronenberg's **RABID**, whilst the political allegory pairs up neatly with Brian Yuzna's splashier but less compelling **SOCIETY**.

Stephen Thrower

SHORT NIGHT OF THE GLASS DOLLS
aka **LA CORTE NOTTE DELLE BAMBOLE DI VETRO / PARALYZED**

Italy / West Germany / Yugoslavia, 1971

writer/director: **Aldo Lado**
director of photography: **Giuseppe Ruzzolini**
editor: **Mario Morra**
music: **Ennio Morricone**
producer: **Enzo Doria** (Enzo Passadore)

cast: **Ingrid Thulin** (Jessica), **Jean Sorel** (Gregory Moore), **Mario Adorf** (Jack McPherson), **Barbara Bach** (Mira Svoboda), **Fabian Sovagovic** (Professor Karting), **José Quaglio** (Valinksi, Minister of the Interior), **Piero Vida** (Commissar Kirkov), **Daniele Dublino** (doctor), **Luciano Catenacci** (morgue attendant), **Sergio Serafini** (second morgue attendant).

Aldo Lado has never received much attention from horror fans, probably due to the obscurity of his films more than anything else. Whilst his SF effort, **THE HUMANOID** (directed under the pseudonym George B. Lewis) is a sappy, crappy rip-off of George Lucas (no doubt the inspiration for Lado's false namesake), his two terror films - this and **THE NIGHT TRAIN MURDERS** - are well above the norm from similar fare produced in the U.S. and Great Britain. In the U.S., **LA CORTE NOTTE DELLE BAMBOLE DI VETRO** (Lado's debut effort) has been retitled **PARALYZED** for its video release. Obviously based on the main character's predicament throughout the majority of the picture, none the less it's a terrible title. The film features parallel plots, mixing the disappearance of the character played by Barbara Bach from the film's proceedings with attempts to figure out who caused Sorel's paralysis, and more importantly, why?

Journalist Gregory Moore (Franco Nero look-alike Jean Sorel) is on assignment in Prague, reporting on the Yugoslav government's repressive activities. His other reporter friends include former lover Jessica (Thulin) and Jack (Adorf), both of whom will be drawn into the mysterious disappearance of Greg's girlfriend Mira (a youthful looking Barbara Bach). However, in the first minute of the film's running time, we discover that Gregory has been found unconscious in the bushes outside the local tavern.

Presumed dead, he's actually conscious but totally immobile due to a drug he was given, and we spend the balance of the film discovering how he came to be in such a predicament and what happened to Mira.

Lado uses the film's exterior locations (Yugoslavia) to enhance the claustrophobia the Sorel character feels. More than once we see the various townfolks staring at the camera (the character's point of view) with the look of catatonia in their eyes. In fact, the entire idea of repression and its origins throughout the world's history is revealed in the film's denouement to have supernatural underpinnings. Yet Lado will turn around and use a roving, prowling camera for effect during some very suspenseful set-pieces. (A scene on an overhead train track involving Sorel, an elderly victim, smoke and a loud soundtrack definitely show Lado and his cinematographer Giuseppe Ruzzolini's ability to exceed the usual thriller conventions.)

The featured players acquit themselves quite well, with the two female leads emoting effectively as well as shedding their very seventies-style clothing. Mario Adorf is wasted, sometimes seeming to be dubbed with an Irish accent and sometimes not. He does play the gruff, world-weary journalist to the hilt in the few scenes he appears in. Jean Sorel starred in quite a few thrillers during this period (Umberto Lenzi's **PARANOIA** and Lucio Fulci's **ONE ON TOP OF THE OTHER** come to mind). Though he spends a lot of time stone cold stiff on a slab, the extended flashbacks that occur throughout the film help establish him as the film's central character. His skills make the film's ending all the more tragic when it is reached. Ennio Morricone contributes a sparse musical score that never overpowers the proceedings. The romantic *leitmotifs* play off the atonal suspense themes without calling attention to themselves. Lado truly deserves the lion's share of the credit as he both scripted and directed. **LA CORTE NOTTE DELLE BAMBOLE DI VETRO** builds to a surprise twist that may not be an audience pleaser, but within the film's setting makes perfect sense. Highly recommended to even the most jaded genre burn-out.

Craig Ledbetter

THE SLASHER IS THE SEX MANIAC
aka **RIVELAZIONI DI UN MANIACO SESSUALE AL**
CAPO DELLA SQUADRA MOBILE /
SO SWEET, SO DEAD / PENETRATION
Italy, 1972

director: **Roberto [Bianchi] Montero**
screenplay: **Luigi Angelo, Italo Fasan, Roberto Montero**
director of photography: **Fausto Rossi**
editor: **Rolando Salvatori**
music: **Giorgio Gaslini**
producer: **Eugenio Florimonte**

cast: **Farley Granger** (Inspector Cappuana), **Sylva Koscina** (Barbara Cappuana), **Susan Scott [Nieves Navarro]** (Lilly), **Annabella Incontrera** (Franca Santangeli), **Sylvano Truquili** (Paolo Santangeli), **Chris Avram** (Professor Casali), **Femi Benussi** (Serena), **Sandro Pizzoro** (Roberto), **Bruno Boschetti** (), **Luciano Rossi** (Gastone, morgue attendant).

The *giallo* cycle, starting in 1962 with Mario Bava's **THE EVIL EYE** and fuel-injected by Argento's **THE BIRD WITH THE CRYSTAL PLUMAGE**, fell prey in the early seventies to the less skillful attentions of directors like Leon Klimovsky (**A DRAGONFLY FOR EACH CORPSE**), Alfonso Brescia (**RAGAZZA TUTTA NUDA ASSASSINATA NEL PARCO**) and **SLASHER**'s Roberto Montero. Whereas Bava had assuaged routine plotting with his elaborate design and sinuous camerawork, these minor hacks satisfied themselves by taking the masked, gloved killer with his bevy of beautiful victims, and dumping them ingloriously into a static and ugly *mise-en-scène*. Argento's *giallo* innovation was to make the investigation of flamboyant murders the obsession not of detectives but artists, removing the judgemental aspect of the thriller format and substituting a fascination with desire, obsession and violence. Montero ignores this, attaching lead weights to his murder mystery by having the proceedings ploddingly overseen by detective Farley Granger, a once capable actor whom one charitably assumes must have suffered a stroke since his excellent performances for Hitchcock.

A series of grisly murders involving the unfaithful wives of well-to-do married men leads the police to speculate that a psychopath has appointed himself moral

avenger of the town's upper class. As Inspector Cappuana (Granger) looks into the slayings he is repeatedly rebuffed by the insular mistrust of the people he is expected to protect. At the scene of each crime, the killer leaves candid photographs of the woman's infidelities strewn over her corpse - with the face of the lover scratched away - leading the detective to suspect the twitchy morgue assistant Gastoni (Avram), who admits to taking photos of dead women in his care. Professor Cassali, the pathologist in charge of the case, vouches for his assistant and suggests that the killer might be a jealous homosexual. Further victims mount up, including the adulterous wife of a prominent lawyer who, himself pursuing a relationship with the wife of a neighbouring cripple, describes himself as "*a moral opportunist*". Ultimately, the murderer is goaded into the open when Cappuana arrests a stooge 'killer' and announces that the murders were the work of an idiot. It transpires that the killer was jilted by his wife in a case reported extensively in the press, with the humiliation presumably acting as a spur to his deeds. Cappuana's wife Barbara (Koscina) is the killer's final victim - the inspector is shocked to learn that her affair with a younger man, Roberto, was common knowledge to everyone but him. Cappuana watches impassively through a side window as his wife is slaughtered, before entering and shooting dead the masked killer, who turns out to be... no, I'll leave you biting your nails...

There are two ways of watching a film like this - you can either view it critically, noting its blatantly conservative fantasy of punishment for adultery visited exclusively on beautiful women; or you can take a more detached, vaguely amused approach, enjoying the unintentional absurdities as they rub shoulders with a full repertoire of *giallo* clichés. The entertainment is rather queasily coloured by scenes such as Cappuana's cold observation of his wife's death - after shooting the killer, he kneels at his wife's side and, ignoring her dead body, bitterly screws up a picture of her *in flagrante delicto*. No care is taken to distance the viewer from such vindictive displays of jealousy and we're left with the feeling that the film is saying to its audience: 'you may think you're a liberal - but you'd soon change your tune if this happened to you.' Misery's not the only thing that loves company...

On the other hand, characters like Avram's sleazy, over-enthusiastic morgue attendant provide less repre-

hensible distraction. The police quiz him about his personal life and ask why he has remained single. "*Girls... sooner or later they find out about the corpses*", he says wistfully - before displaying his collection of photographs depicting favourite female cadavers. There are a few snippets of 'social commentary' to distract us from the misogyny, too: "*You reactionary - you're a spoiled bourgeois who skips current events that shape the world*", babbles one girl, whose boyfriend is more interested in her tits than her politics. Well, that told us! Other moments of dialogue, such as an extremely effeminate suspect's protestation: "*I may be homosexual but I'm not homicidal!*" are hardly scintillating, but when delivered by a grotesquely over-the-top dubbing 'artiste' at top speed, they do make the film more amusing than repellent. Scenes of the killer decked out in glaringly conspicuous *giallo* garb, running across a beach after a screaming victim, offer an accidental tinge of absurdity that renders the maniac more comical than threatening. But this is still a very formulaic exercise: the plot and dialogue remain at a rudimentary level, tossing Argento-ish asides like "*I keep thinking I know the answer - but there's still something missing*" into the pot long before any sort of clues have pointed to the killer's identity. Technically, the film is adequate - Rossi's photography is clear and occasionally quite attractive - but most of the interiors look like a single set hastily re-assembled and sparsely scattered with hideous rugs and cushions.

Is it possible to end a review of this film without mentioning that William Mishkin (Andy Milligan's erstwhile producer) re-titled the film **PENETRATION** and added pornographic footage for the American grindhouse market, billing the resultant mongrel as "*The Ultimate X-crime*"? I guess not, although I'm promising myself this is the last time I'll write it! Of course, the last thing this movie needs is to be slowed down further with tedious skin-flick inserts, but it's hard to get worked up about the fate of what is really a rather tepid Italian effort.

Stephen Thrower

Addendum: Roberto Montero died in 1986, aged 79. His last film was **THE SECRET NIGHTS OF LUCREZIA BORGIA**, made in 1982.



▲ ▼ SOMETHING CREEPING IN THE DARK

<SAFE> ▼



SOMETHING CREEPING IN THE DARK
aka **QUALCOSA STRISCIA NEL BUIO**
Italy, 1970

writer/director: **Mario Colucci**
director of photography: **Giuseppe Aquari**
editor: **Enzo Micarelli**
music: **Angelo Francesco Lavagnino**
producer: **Dino Fazio**

cast: **Farley Granger** (Spike), **Lucia Bosé** (Sylvia Forest), **Giacomo Rossi-Stuart** (Donald Forrest), **Stan Cooper** (Stelvio Rosi), **Mia Genberg** (Susan West), **John Hamilton** (Joe, the caretaker), **Giulia Rovai** (Joe's girl), **Frank Beltramme** (Sam), **Angelo Francesco Lavagnino** (Professor Lawrence), **Dino Fazio** (Inspector Wright).

Despite the always captivating presence of Bosé, Colucci's attempt at a claustrophobic supernatural thriller never manages to transcend its embarrassingly predictable script. Obviously shot on a shoestring budget, **SOMETHING CREEPING IN THE DARK** is simply a stilted rehash of one of the most shop-worn horror clichés in the book: the group of strangers trapped by a storm in the old, dark house. Whereas directors like Bava and Freda would have seized the opportunity to orchestrate idiosyncratic variations on the most standard of themes, Colucci seems incapable of doing anything other than plod from one scene to the next, with only a few isolated moments of high-angled subjective camerawork providing any relief for the viewer.

Supposedly set in England, the half-baked plot cranks into gear with Inspector Wright (Fazio) and his partner Sam (Beltramme) capturing Spike (Granger), a homicidal maniac, when his escape route is blocked by a collapsed bridge. Along with several others - businessman Donald Forrest (Rossi-Stuart) and his wife Sylvia (Bosé); Professor Lawrence, a philosophy teacher (Lavagnino); Doctor Williams (Cooper) and his assistant Susan West (Genberg) - they are forced to take refuge in a nearby mansion. The hippy caretaker, Joe (Hamilton), informs them that the house belongs to the estate of Lady Sheila Marlowe (Loredana Nusciak), a practising spiritualist who died in mysterious circumstances. Sylvia conducts a séance during which her husband becomes possessed by Sheila Marlowe's spirit, and after this some members of the group begin to suffer strange hallucinations. Following another abortive

escape attempt, Spike is imprisoned in the basement, but is set free by Forrest who then strangles his wife and commits suicide. In the memorably unspectacular finale, Spike batters Sam to death in the garden and is inexplicably transformed into a monster. As he re-enters the house and prepares to attack the others, he is shot dead by Doctor Williams. Dawn breaks, and the caretaker tells the remaining guests that a helicopter is on the way...

Although Lavagnino's agreeably sparse score has its moments, any dregs of atmosphere that may have seeped down to the bottom of the barrel quickly evaporate due to Colucci's lazy reliance on age-old genre stand-bys. Only the addition of colour, a brief splattering of blood and the perfunctory exposure of Rovai's breasts distinguishes this clunker from the shoddy Monogram B-features of the 1940s. The dependence on camera placement and sound effects to create a sense of terror suggests that Colucci may be attempting to imitate Val Lewton, but his chronic shortage of cinematic ideas soon puts paid to that. All the usual supernatural paraphernalia (a tarot spread that ends with the death card, disembodied laughter etc.) is thrown in without the slightest trace of conviction, and Granger's climactic metamorphosis into the (unseen) monster is so unbelievably lame even Jean Yarbrough would have thought twice about leaving it in the final cut. Production design also exhibits extensive mediocrity, with the dreary browns and reds of the bleakly furnished sets evoking the ambience of a cheap '70s soap opera.

As far as the acting goes, at least Bosé and Rossi Stuart can rely on their good looks to carry them through. Both struggle gamely to invigorate their parts, but the numbing banalities of the script give them little room for manoeuvre. Granger's performance is simply appalling, and his sheer awkwardness ruins one of the few scenes where this turgid travesty actually threatens to come to life: as a haunting piano melody plays, Sylvia imagines she is being attacked by Spike. She attempts to stab him to death but he laughs maniacally as she repeatedly plunges the knife into his stomach. The rest of the cast - which includes the film's producer and composer - are so wooden, they appear to be engaged in a competition to see who can do the best impersonation of Jennifer Connolly. A large percentage of the running time is taken up with people standing around exchanging 'meaningful' glances, which thankfully gives the audience a break from the laughably hackneyed dialogue.

If **SOMETHING CREEPING IN THE DARK** was as wonderfully awful as Jean Brismée's hypnotically bad **DEVIL'S NIGHTMARE**, it could easily be forgiven for its stunning lack of originality. But Colucci presents his material with such po-faced solemnity, the end result is so tedious it's painful. For its British release. Butcher's Film Distributors double-billed this turkey with Peter Rush (Filippo W. Maria Ratti)'s **THE NIGHT OF THE DAMNED**.

Mark Ashworth

Addendum: Mario Colucci now works as a character actor in films and TV and I met him on the Ricky Tognazzi film **EXCELLENT CADAVERS/I GIUDICI** (1998). He's such a nice man that I must admit to keeping quiet about both my opinion of his film and the above review. Before you all start to worry, however, rest assured that I won't be capable of such tact if I'm ever unfortunate enough to run into Wim fucking Wenders. *Mark Ashworth, 2003*

THE SPIDER LABYRINTH
aka **IL NIDO DEL RAGNO**
Italy, 1988

director: **Gianfranco Giagni**
screenplay: **Tonino Cervi, Riccardo Arragno, Cesare Frugoni, Gianfranco Manfredini**
director of photography: **Nino Celeste**
editor: **Sergio Montanari**
music: **Franco Piersanti**
producer: **Tonino Cervi**

cast: **Roland Wybenga** (Professor Alan Whitmore), **Paola Rinaldi** (Genevieve Wise), **Margareta Von Krauss, Claudia Muzii** [Claudia Muzil], **William Berger** (Inspector Blasco), **Stéphane Audran** (Mrs. Coomb), **Valeriano Santinelli, Massimiliano Pavone, Arnaldo Dell'Acqua**.

We may be tempted to re-evaluate the nature of our obsessive interest in horror, when it culminates in previously undiscovered D'Amato porn films or Jess Franco women-in-prison efforts. If this is what it all boils down to - crotch zooms and editing so leaden it could induce coma - you wonder whether you should start getting out of the house more often. Of course, such foolish thinking can

easily be shattered when confronted with one of *those* films - i.e. a newfound masterpiece of stunning technique, which crops up out of nowhere and completely restores your faith in this sort of thing. **THE SPIDER LABYRINTH** is such a film, a mind-blowing hybrid of Italian *giallo* and gory other-worldly horror. For my money, it's the best supernatural oriented Italian horror film since Argento's **INFERNO** (which, not so coincidentally, it also resembles at times), a film whose intriguing stylistic bravura stands with the best of Bava, Avati, Fulci and Freda, in the higher echelon of Italian shock cinema. Relative newcomer Gianfranco Giagni, responsible for several episodes of the 1989 Italian soft-core TV series *Valentina*, has proven himself a helmsman of considerable talent and vision, capable of weaving colourful, stylized setpieces reminiscent of the best of you-know-who into an eerie mélange of overwhelming paranoia and fear.

The film opens with a nightmare - a child locked inside a closet during a game of hide and seek, his claustrophobia suddenly made all the more horrifying by the appearance of a huge spider on its web, looming ever closer to the boy. The dream ends as Professor Alan Whitmore (Wybenga, frequently a bit too understated for his own good) wakes to a ringing telephone. He is summoned to an emergency conference by his associates in a secretive project he is toiling on for the university. Upon arriving at the office in downtown Dallas, Alan is informed he must fly to Budapest immediately to re-establish contact with a fellow professor and researcher, Leo Roth, who holds the final piece in the puzzle of a lost ancient religion which numerous scholars worldwide have been researching for the university project. Roth has not responded to enquiries in over two months.

Upon Alan's arrival in Budapest, Roth's assistant Genevieve Wise takes Alan to Roth's house, where he meets Roth's 'wife'. She informs Alan that her husband recently suffered a nervous breakdown, and will likely be incoherent. When Alan enters the study to speak to him, he finds Roth a terrified, paranoid old man, almost too afraid even to speak to him. He quickly hands Alan a group of photos and papers, and tells him to come back that evening. Suddenly, a black ball crashes through the window, and when Alan turns back to Roth, he is gone. Genevieve takes Alan back to his hotel - an impressive labyrinth of Gothic architecture reminiscent of the New Orleans hotel of Fulci's **THE BEYOND** and the apartment building of **INFERNO** - where he is met by Mrs. Coomb, a mysterious figure who seems

more interested in Alan than your average hotel manager should be. As Alan leaves the hotel that night, he is met on the street by an elderly derelict, who warns Alan - by name - that he must flee Budapest immediately, or forever "be trapped...sucked into the vortex." Alan runs to Roth's house which is surrounded by police; on entering, Alan discovers Roth is dead, his body suspended in the air by some type of cobweb-like material, elaborately spun. He tells the police the events of that day's meeting, and of Mrs. Roth; Genevieve interrupts, telling Alan that Roth had no wife. He also notes that the window is now intact. When Alan returns to the hotel for dinner with Genevieve, he sees with much discomfort that the entire room, led by Mrs. Coomb, engages in an overpowering whirlwind of shifting views and conspiratorial glances aimed at him, before they all suddenly leave. He tells Genevieve of the contents of Roth's package - photo's of inscriptions on stone tablets, from the 3rd millennium B.C., and papers describing "a great cobweb closing every passage...a labyrinth without exit."

After returning to his room, Alan is startled by the appearance of Mariah, the maid. She also tries to warn Alan of impending danger, begging him to leave Budapest. She is interrupted by Mrs. Coomb, who tells her to leave the professor alone. In a maze of hanging bedsheets and aqua-tinged lighting gels, Maria tries to sleep, only to be awakened by the emergence of a black ball which rolls near her bed. She's then viciously murdered by a nightmarish figure of flaming red hair, bulging eyes and incompetent orthodonture. Alan ventures to investigate the screams, and finds a vast, walled-up child's room in a secluded area of the hotel. Mrs. Coomb sits inside, slowly rocking an infant's cradle. In one of the film's most haunting sequences, she tells Alan of the tragic death of her child years ago, and of her paralysing grief resulting from the knowledge of her child trapped in "the eternal darkness." Alan notices a small, spider-like scar on her wrist, which she explains as resulting from her failed suicide attempt. When he offers the concept of God and faith as possible comfort, Mrs. Coomb replies with the film's best line: bitterly, spitefully, she retorts, "God? There is no God. There is no light. There is nothing."

The following day, Genevieve asks Alan to clarify the subject of Roth's studies; he replies that they revolved around an ancient religion, followed around the world by isolated, seemingly unconnected groups of people - connecting "like an enormous cobweb." He asks her if she is familiar with the name Polgar Moricz, which was written on

the back of Roth's photo of the tablet. She gives him instructions to locate Moricz, revealed to be local rare antique dealer with whom Roth was involved. Alan attempts to locate the shop, only to be repeatedly lost amidst the deserted streets, a labyrinth of tiny alleyways and huge courts, devoid of life. Meanwhile, Moricz is murdered in his shop by the same female assassin, and when Alan finally does arrive, he is forced to hide in a closet to escape the same assailant. In his hiding place, he reacts in terror at the emergence of a large spider approaching him...

Suddenly, the door opens. The old man who attempted to warn Alan before guides him away now, telling him there might still be the possibility of escape. He guides Alan down into a vast underground cavern, all the while informing him of the nature of his dangerous involvement: "The Weavers" are the followers of the ancient religion, which still exists today. Its numbers are increasing, none of whom wish for the tablet to be made public, and the names of their Gods - who are "not myths, but living creatures" - to be known. They have exempted Alan from their "labyrinth of death" so that they may transform him into one of them. As the old man guides Alan to escape, he tells him to beware of their omniscient presence, indicating that their followers can be identified by the white, spider scars on their wrists. Alan navigates his way through the maze of tunnels to escape.

The black ball rolls to the old man's feet; it hatches open like a mechanical egg, releasing a large spider. As the old man insists "we will win in the end", the red-haired murderess regurgitates a thick, slimy web material which wraps around his neck, hanging him from the top of the cavern. Back at the hotel, Alan encounters Genevieve, who dreamily undresses him, before doing the same herself. The two make love; but Genevieve spits up some odd, slimy substance on Alan's back as he sleeps...

When he awakens, Genevieve is gone; in the hall, he sees the back of a figure he assumes to be her. The woman spins around and removes her wig - the same fiery-headed assassin of the sect lunges at Alan, hurtling him into the glass bookcase, which shatters. After a painful struggle, Alan thrusts a glass shard into her neck, killing her, upon which she changes form back to that of Mrs. Roth. Back in the hall, Genevieve tells him "You've killed - you're ready for us now." Alan enters a huge white chamber filled with Mrs. Coomb, Genevieve, as well as all those suspiciously eyeing him throughout his ordeal. He is strapped down to a

table underneath a small black coffin, from behind which there emerges a vast, glowing light.

If the film falters at all, it's in the closing minutes, where it surrenders its powerful aura of paranoia and conspiracy for Sergio Stivaletti's typically cheesy, traditionally 'horrific' gore and monster effects: the coffin opens, revealing a mutated infant which transforms into an oversized spider, with a shrieking human head that looms over Alan. His wrist is sliced open and a large (pretty nifty) stop-motion spider crawls inside the cut, forming the now familiar spider-shaped scar.

Back in Dallas, Alan enters the office of his university associates; he regretfully informs them that his trip produced nothing, for he wasn't able to salvage Roth's research following his untimely demise. However, his associates inform him that just after he left, a package from Roth arrived, containing photos of an ancient tablet, the inscriptions on which they hope Alan will decipher for them. One of the men goes to another room to get the photos, leaving Alan with the other two. When he returns, he discovers the mutilated bodies of his two collaborators. Suddenly, Alan lunges at him, blade in hand, his face twisted into the duplication of 'Mrs. Roth's' demonic visage...

I must confess that my initial delight with **THE SPIDER LABYRINTH** stemmed mainly from the film's most immediate charms: Franco Piersanti's lush score (which begs for an accompanying soundtrack release); Nino Celeste's beautiful cinematography, which incorporates gorgeously oversaturated colour schemes and fluidly exploratory craning and tracking into an ethereal view of Budapest (reminiscent of the deserted Venice of **DON'T LOOK NOW** and Paul Schrader's recent **COMFORT OF STRANGERS**); the elaborate set design; and, admittedly, the very beautiful Paola Rinaldi (I believe) as Genevieve. However, the more I view Giagni's remarkable film, the more I am struck by how well-constructed and elaborate the whole work is, and how this relates to the underlying theme.

The film really is a labyrinth, in every conceivable sense of the word - a tentatively interconnected series of seemingly disconnected and perhaps unimportant characters, phrases, images, occurrences and visual clues, that ultimately weave together into a vast web of conspiratorial threats. Numerous plot elements which may perhaps strike a hollow note of confusion initially become intriguingly important in retrospect (Genevieve's odd questions and

behaviour, the child swinging in the court of Roth's house when Alan first visits, et al). The overwhelming motif of the labyrinth is also borne out by the location set-pieces - the vast, dizzying old hotel, the maze of bedsheets and hanging cloth engulfing Mariah before her demise, the huge sauna bath Alan and Genevieve wander through while discussing the death of Mrs. Coomb's child, the confusing, deserted streets, the underground caverns Alan staggers through with the old man, etc. It would certainly appear that Giagni is one hell of a director when it comes to creating a sense of specifically alienating strangeness, a particular feel; and his work is imbued with a great deal of care and attention towards the finished effort.

So please, if you have been contemplating investing hard-earned time and money in the likes of, say, Bruno Mattei's **SEXY NITE REPORT** or D'Amato's **11 DAYS, 11 NIGHTS**, then do yourself the small favour of subjecting yourself instead to one of the best European horror efforts of the past few years. Hopefully, any future Giagni film will be of equal merit, as well.

Travis Crawford

STORIA DI UNA MONACA CLAUSURA
aka **DIARY OF A CLOISTERED NUN**
Italy / France / West Germany / Monaco, 1973

director: **Domenico Paolella**
screenplay: **Antonio [Tonino] Cervi, Domenico Paolella**
director of photography: **Armando Nannuzzi**
editor: **Amadeo Giamini**
music: **Piero Piccioni**
producer: **Tonino Cervi**

cast: **Catherine Spaak** (Sister Elisabetta), **Suzy Kendall** (Mother Superior), **Eleonora Giorgi** (Carmela Maria Rosa), **Martine Brochard** (drowned nun), **Ann Odessa, Antonio Falsi** (Carmela's lover), **Umberto Orsini** (Elisabetta's lover), **Paola Senatore, Clara Colosimo, Rina Franchetti**.

I must confess to having donned a Chas Blockhead hat (or, more to the point, a 'Dog Bob' Briggs attitude) when I viewed this picture, expecting mucho pussy bumping, whipping, flogging and assorted bawdiness - this approach given further impetus by the misleading credits, which

appear over woodcuts and etchings of medieval torture scenes... not to mention the impressive cast, who have collectively chalked up some decent spaghetti sleaze credentials. Needless to say, I was wrong - this is no **FLAVIA THE HERETIC** - it's a beautifully photographed historical drama ("based on fact", of course...) about the travails of everyday life in a medieval convent. As a soapish continental art movie it works perfectly; period details appear accurate, sets and costumes are superb, and all the 'incidental' atmospherics (lighting, music and so on) are immaculate. For a brief 'synopsis' let's assume the following is uttered in a slightly retarded Southern twang...

This here bumbo gets the gospel, see, and points her tail in the direction of the local cathouse - 'cept this ain't no lezbo fag farm buddies, it's a goddamn nunnery... But this here bitch jest cain't be good enough, and ends up on the business end of a cat-o-nine-tails. And gee, other shit happen too: some dyke's secret boyfriend is murdered by a jealous lezzie; Spaak shows her udders; another hag gets to exercise her tongue on the floor-cleaning circuit (fans of **MONDO PAZZO** should be familiar with this favourite Sicilian pastime). And hell, if you can tell the difference between one cunt in cloisters and another then you're a better nun-fancier than me, pal. Kendall's one of my fave '70s 'with it' starlets, but half the time I couldn't have identified her if I'd had a gun pointed at my head. The actual lesbianism (for which I of course wore a backwards baseball cap and slopped Bud' all over my Guns & Roses tee-shirt while whooping "Yeah, where's them poosay-bumpers!" etc) was, um, not there. Instead there was a mild closet eroticism, so when me and the boys took the tape back to the St. Theresa Video Tabernacle (shoulda realised something was wrong earlier, eh?) we complained long and loud.

In real terms, this is a much better than average spaghetti programmer, stylishly directed by veteran hack Paoella, whose career has encompassed working with Pasolini, making mafia films for American TV, directing Totò, Maciste, Ursus, Hercules and Goliath movies (plus a couple of westerns in the sixties), the odd 'women in prison' epic - all the staples of an Italian director's career, in fact. (For further information see Chris Frayling's *Spaghetti Westerns*). If you feel like sitting through a non-too-exploitative nun movie (one sort of misses the medieval bikini lines and stretch marks...) then this is vaguely worth searching for, I suppose.

Stefan Jaworzyn

TENDERNESS OF THE WOLVES
aka **DIE ZÄRTLICHKEIT DER WÖLFE**
West Germany, 1973

director: **Ulli Lommel**
screenplay: **Kurt Raab**
director of photography: **Jürgen Jürges**
editor: **Thea Eymész**
music: **Peer Raben**
producer: **Rainer Werner Fassbinder**

cast: **Kurt Raab** (Fritz Haarman), **Jeff Roden** (Grans), **Margit Carstensen** (Frau Lindner), **Wolfgang Schenck** (Inspector Braun), **Rainer Hauer** (Inspector Müller), **Rainer Werner Fassbinder** (Wittkowski), **Brigitte Mira** (Louise Engel), **Karl Von Liebezeit** (Engel), **Malte Mylo** (Engel's son), **El Hedi Ben Salem** (French soldier).

Neighbours of bald, ingratiating Fritz Haarman are perturbed by the banging and clattering which emanates from his top floor flat at night - but this is depressed, post war Germany, so they keep their complaints to themselves and accept the little man's offers of cheap, black market meat. One morning the police force entry to Haarman's dingy quarters and find him asleep with a naked teenage boy. He is charged with offences against minors, but avoids criminal proceedings by agreeing to become a police informer. He's then released and told to obtain an ID card - now he can pose as a plain-clothes policeman. Haarman takes to his new role avidly, and soon sees the special personal advantages it can bring him. Apart from superciliously hassling a few drunks, he concentrates on picking up teenage boys, runaways or vagrants, telling them that he will spare them from arrest if they agree to accompany him back home. There he claims to offer bed and board to disadvantaged youths, suggesting that he can find them work and get them housed. But, as Frau Lindner from the flat below observes, of the young men who enter the flat scarcely any seem to leave.

Haarman has a busy social life among the deadbeats, decadents and underworld types that frequent the seedier bars and cafés. He's a petty thief, stealing clothes from washing lines, even posing as a priest to con 'alms for the poor' from well-to-do households. He is also involved with the prostitution scene - the only tenderness he feels for anyone is a pathetic devotion to Grans, a pimp who is

able to feign ignorance of Haarman's darker activities. Many of Haarman's acquaintances mock him openly with jokes about his preference for 'necking with his boys' - but without rancor. Besides, they find his meat supply essential.

More boys disappear into Haarman's clutches. Frau Lindner spies on him one night, seeing the strange little man throwing oddly shaped parcels into the river. Haarman is besotted with an androgynous boy pianist, son of a local bigwig, and boldly seduces him back to his flat in full view of Grans and a couple of prostitutes. Once he has his quarry alone he plies him with drink, strips him and leads the passive youth to the bedroom, attacking his neck and gouging the boy's jugular with his teeth. Next morning, Grans arrives and Haarman offers the bare minimum of explanation for the boy's 'accidental' death. He persuades his friend to help him dispose of the body.

Haarman's eventual downfall is brought about more by people's annoyance at his neglect to cover his tracks than any moral revulsion. The police discuss his activities with Wittkowski, a gangsterish figure haunting the same dives as Haarman, and agree that he is becoming a nuisance. A trap is set with a young man as bait. Haarman duly pounces and the police force entry once again, to find Haarman chewing at the screaming youth's neck, his face smeared with blood and his eyes glazed with a deep private gluttony. As the shocked officers try to separate the killer from his intended victim, Haarman makes a further frenzied grab for his sobbing prey, succeeding in having another go at the young man's neck before being carted off...

As the final credits inform us, Fritz Haarman (the sex-murderer this story is based on) was executed for his crimes in 1925, after several post-war years spent raping and killing boys, and selling their flesh on the black market (passing it off to indiscriminating consumers as animal meat). The decision to reset the story in the shattered Germany of the mid-to-late 1940s immediately suggests a socio-political focus for the horrors depicted, making this another jaundiced satire of German society to emerge from the Fassbinder group. Ulli Lommel was initially an actor for Fassbinder, and his first film as director benefits from the presence of the *angstmeister* as both producer and performer, as well as drawing on Fassbinder's repertory cast (Margit Carstensen, who played Margie in Zulawski's **POSSESSION**, Wolfgang Schenck, regularly cast as an

odious authority figure; El Hedi Ben Salem, star of **FEAR EATS THE SOUL**). Best of all it features Kurt Raab as Haarman himself, a skilfully unglamorous portrayal which lingers in the mind; urbane, snivelling, wily, obsequious, pitiful and yet still terrifying.

This repellent but definitely human monster is no comic-strip ogre despite the beautiful credits sequence, a tracking shot of Raab's ominous shadow gliding over the walls as he prowls the city streets at night. Neither is he sentimentalised - no shots of a lonely madman sobbing over his victims, and - a little strangely, perhaps - minimal psychoanalytical scrutiny. This is not a 'getting-to-know-you' exercise, so serial killer card-collectors take note. Even the killings are alluded to more often than they are revealed. Apart from one sequence in the middle of the film, and another at the end, Lommel instead chills the viewer by noting the killer's disposal of the victims' clothes, scenes incorporated in a tellingly casual, 'throw-away' fashion. One very young victim enters Haarman's lair wearing a woollen hat. A while later the killer takes an apparently idle walk through the railway sidings. Spotting a gang of kids playing in an abandoned goods wagon, he smilingly presents the hat to another young boy.

Fassbinder's concern with social relationships of a frequently hypocritical nature clearly influenced **TENDERNESS OF THE WOLVES**, and provides some of the most insidious chills of the film. Right from the start, when police break into Haarman's flat and arrest him, we see that this monster is already being tolerated in some sense. A policeman spots the nervous pederast concealing a lump of meat on the floor with a discarded item of clothing, but accepts Haarman's response - "*It's nothing*" - without further inspection. Back at the station, Inspector Braun makes a few desultory noises about not tolerating Haarman's crimes, but then offers him a 'job' as an informer, justifying this with reference to the underfunding of the police service. They even teach him how to pose as a plain-clothes officer. Likewise, there are numerous scenes which show how people around the perverted boy-killer turn a blind eye to his activities in return for the services he provides. Most chillingly of all, a store-owner who buys Haarman's meats spots him sizing up her young son after doing the household a favour - we see in her eyes a realisation of what is on Haarman's mind, an awareness then quickly repressed as she laughs at his lustful manner, as if it were something risqué but merely frivolous.

Of course, everyone has their reasons; poverty is rife, an air of shell-shocked post-War defeat hangs over the assorted store-owners, hausfraus, hookers and spivs, no-one seems inclined to judge others for to do so might liberate a whole can of worms. It was some time before 'ordinary' Germans began to take in the enormity of the wartime horrors they'd been party to, and the film seems to imply the wider denial of unpalatable truths. Haarman's fascistic exploitation of power over children is taken as a symbol for a national malaise. Grans, the sleazy pimp Haarman dotes upon, speaks volumes about the decadence of the period when he comments - flatly and with neither pity nor relish - on Haarman's seduction of a pretty young teenage boy: "*He'll be trampled on tonight...*"

The victims are, when we see them react at all, mostly all-too aware of what lies behind Haarman's oily facade of concern. Either the sexual nature of his interest is submissively accepted, by young men already wearied by poverty, or is allowed to happen in a sort of listless *laissez faire* experiment. Perhaps the most shocking depiction of 'lamb-to-the-slaughter' victimhood involves the aforementioned boy with the hat. He's barely ten by the look of him, yet he accosts Haarman from a window, taunting him by asking 'which way he likes it'. Haarman seems to want nothing to do with this precocious boy, who insolently follows him into his apartment block. After asking Frau Lindner where Herr Haarman lives, he ignores her advice to stay away, mounts the stairs to the killer's door and knocks on it. We never see him again. This young child, already initiated into the offering of sexual favours, obviously exploited yet street-toughened, alarmingly at ease with the idea, virtually throws himself into the jaws of destruction. In the book *Art Politics Cinema - The Cineaste Interviews*, Fassbinder said: "*You must show the victim with his qualities and his faults, his strengths and his weaknesses, his mistakes*". The result is far more devastating than merely depicting 'unsullied' innocents.

The fact of the exploitation of children makes for disturbing viewing. Yet, as happened with the few victims who survived the horrors inflicted on them by American serial-killers like John Wayne Gacy or Robert Berdella, public and police can be incredibly callous towards young men who have encountered atrocity in the course of prostitution. Just being a promiscuous and homosexual teenager, let alone a rent-boy, was enough to deny these youngsters the sympathy one would expect for a rape/torture victim.

They were somehow 'bringing it upon themselves' - Lommel's film shows us a people's heartlessness within a very specific social context, and yet the attitude of indifference is the same in other times and places too.

Technically, **TENDERNESS OF THE WOLVES** is confident if a little cool in its construction. Photography is impressive throughout, and the colour makes good with the grey-blue of washed out rainy streets and misty industrial environs. There is a steadiness to the camerawork which eschews flashiness in favour of unobtrusive set-ups, with just a few carefully controlled tracking shots to propel the ambience of horror beneath mundanity. Some of the acting (Carstensen in particular) hints at the stylized melodrama Fassbinder would embrace in great films like **CHINESE ROULETTE** (which starred Ulli Lommel as well as Carstensen and Mira). But in Kurt Raab's wet-lipped, smirking, bald-headed fiend, so servile and pathetic (comically so at times), but so horribly fixated when guzzling blood from the ripped veins of boys, we see one of the most convincing human monstrosities of the cinema.

Stephen Thrower

TERROR

aka **LA SETTIMA DONNA / ANGST / THE LAST HOUSE ON THE BEACH / TERRORE**
Italy, 1978

director: **Franco Prosperi**

screenplay: **Romano Migliorini, Giambattista Mussetto, Ettore Sanzò**

director of photography: **Cristiano Pogany**

editor: **Franco Malvestito**

music: **Roberto Pregadio**

producer: **Pino Buricchi**

cast: **Florinda Bolkan** (Sister Christina), **Ray Lovelock** (Aldo), **Flavio Andreini** (Walter), **Stefano Cedrati** (Nino), **Sherry Buchanan**, **Laura Tanziani**, **Annaluisa Pesce** [Luisa Maneri] (Matilde), **Laura Trotter**, **Karine Velier**, **Isabel Pisano** (maid).

Yet another entry into the scuzzy subgenre created by Wes Craven's seminal **LAST HOUSE ON THE LEFT** (1972), and nastier than some. In this rarely seen Italian variant directed

by Franco Prosperi (of **MONDO CANE** and **AFRICA ADDIO** infamy), Spaghetti stalwarts Florinda Bolkan and Ray Lovelock face each other off as representatives, respectively, of Good and Evil. Bolkan, better known for her amazing role in **FLAVIA THE HERETIC** (1975), once again dons saintly garb as the teacher of a gaggle of teenage girls from a church school, resident at a secluded cliff-top house by the sea to practise Shakespeare's 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' (an irony that is surely not lost on the viewer, given the nightmare of subsequent events!) Their idyll is rudely interrupted by the forceful entry of Lovelock (so great in Jorge Grau's 1974 flick **THE LIVING DEAD AT THE MANCHESTER MORGUE**), and his two brutish buddies, on the run after a failed and bloody bank raid. Lovelock's character Aldo is portrayed as an intelligent middle-class drop-out whose considerable skills and charm have festered into psychotic rage against society; Prosperi continually compares his character with those of his moronic friends throughout the film, and it is only towards the end of the story that it is revealed that Lovelock is actually worse than the other two scum bags. Prosperi infuses a heady brew of class warfare into his vicious scenario by having all three intruders make pointed references to the girls' 'privileged' backgrounds, thereby adding an element of 'getting back at the rich' to their actions, an interesting embroidering of an otherwise merely brutalist plot. Needless to say, the seven women are terrorised, humiliated and sexually assaulted in unpleasant scenes that are shot in lurid, leering, soft-porno style. Some of the violence is extreme, notably the killing of the girls' maid with an iron to the head; and the sick, gloating 'rape-by-walking-stick' murder of a girl who had just made an unsuccessful escape attempt rivals the flick-knife defloration in Aldo Lado's **NIGHT TRAIN MURDERS** (1975).

Those who have seen Bolkan in **FLAVIA...** will be pleased to know that, like her rebel nun in that film, her Sister Christina is no cringing, weepy, helpless female, but a forceful, assured woman who copes admirably with the terrible situation, maintaining her dignity in the face of considerable provocation, not least being her violent stripping by one of the thugs in front of her teenage charges, and her rape by the same man, aided by a knife-wielding Lovelock. Following the aforementioned rape-murder, Bolkan is shown rejecting her forgiving Christian beliefs, removing her crucifix and putting it away in a cupboard, metaphorically preparing herself for the violent revenge she

and the surviving girls mete out to the thugs; she herself poisons one by lethal injection, and blows out another's brains with a pistol, leaving it up to the enraged teenagers to shotgun-blast Lovelock in the stomach and beat him to death with a variety of sharp and heavy garden implements. This loaded climax, in which Prosperi might be hinting that the girls are little different to their erstwhile tormentors under the skin, is strengthened by having a close-up shot of Bolkan reacting in nausea to the girls' frenzy, turning away from their carnage as the camera shows a final shot of a seagull swooping over the sea, a bookending image to that which opens **TERROR**. It's an unnerving end to a disturbing film, and one that sits a little uneasily with the viewer. As an exercise in style-conscious nihilism **TERROR** works on nearly all levels, being both a (very) mean-spirited revenge tragedy and a prime example of late seventies Italian sado-sleaze. Though in the end no less cynical or exploitative than Prosperi's earlier Mondo atrocity exhibitions, **TERROR** can more readily be recommended and indeed enjoyed.

Nigel Burrell

*Addendum: the unauthorized title music is a loop of the sax intro to Bryan Ferry's 1976 single **Let's Stick Together**.*

TERROR 2000: DEUTSCHLAND AUSSER KONTROLLE
aka **TERROR 2000: INTENSIVSTATION**
DEUTSCHLAND
Germany, 1992

director: **Christoph Schlingensief**
screenplay: **Schlingensief**, **Oskar Roehler**, **Uli Hanisch**
director of photography: **Reinhard Köcher**
editor: **Bettina Böhler**
music: **Kambiz Giah**, **Jacques Arr**
producers: **Renée Gundelach**, **Christian Fürst**

cast: **Margit Carstensen**, **Peter Kern**, **Susanne Bredehoft**, **Alfred Edel**, **Udo Kier** (Priest), **Alfred Albrecht**, **Gary Indiana** (Social Worker), **Eva Maria Kurz** (Frau Braun).

As a narrator promises a filmload of "angst, sexuality und tod", Schlingensief takes us to the much-disputed Polish-German border (which replaces the Berlin Wall of

THE GERMAN CHAINSAW MASSACRE as a symbolic divide). A bunch of gun-toting Nazis, including Udo Kier as a priest who has a habit of taking his automatic barrel out of his mouth and messily blowing out the brains of random victims, violently assault refugees in a railway carriage. Early on the film establishes rape and brain-blasting as its central images, then proceeds to repeat them at length. A low point comes when a massively overweight brownshirt goon (Kern) sings 'Springtime for Hitler' while forcibly buggering an apparently retarded girl (Bredehoft) he has first molested while she is taking a dump behind a bush.

A large-ish cast, including many hold-overs from the earlier film, play victims, Nazis, ex-communists, gastarbieters, retards, average Germans, Klansmen and mad people. Fassbinder regular Carstensen (**THE BITTER TEARS OF PETRA VON KANT**) wanders through as Kern's demented wife, at least bringing some tone to playing which is almost entirely on a level of screaming fits (even usually frozen-faced Kier screams and contorts throughout), though she too gets some passages of hysteria. Everyone gets to wear a blonde Lulu wig at some point, and a lot of people copy Udo's gun-in-mouth trick. It all takes place in a railway siding set of wastelands, woods and roadways.

The score has mock passages of James Bond-cum-Peter Gunn music used to accompany 'action': which consists of fascists gunning down minorities or yet another rape. It consistently tries for the offensive, with rapists pissing on their victims and the mentally handicapped roped into atrocity scenes, but is defused somewhat by its relentless straining for impact and the limited abilities of the cast. Most of the couplings involve fully-clothed 'penetration', and rapists humping away less like sex fiends than in-heat mutts thrusting away at the postman's leg. You also get one-off shots like someone's rectum taking a bullet hit at close range.

TERROR 2000 lays into fascism with chainsaw ferocity and its tone isn't all that removed from, say, Godard's **WEEKEND**, but it's an impossible film to sit still for, never more than half-baked in its alleged politics and with nothing real to contribute to any debate about Europe other than a few vomiting or masturbating scenes and the occasional out-of-tune rendition of the 'Horst Wessel Song' among the wistful English-language numbers.

Kim Newman

TERROR EXPRESS

aka **LA RAGAZZA DEL VAGONE LETTO / TORTURE TRAIN**
Italy, 1979

director: **Ferdinando Baldi**

screenplay: **Luigi Montefiore**

director of photography: **Giuseppe Aquari**

editor: **Alessandro Lucidi**

music: **Marcello Giombini**

producer: **Armando Todaro**

cast: **Silvia Dionisio** (Juliette), **Werner Pochath** (Elio), **Zora Kerova** (Anna), **Carlo De Mejo** (David Schuman), **Gianluigi Chirizzi** (Pierre), **Venantino Venantini** (Anna's husband), **Fausto Lombardi**, **Roberto Caporali**, **Fiammetta Flamini**, **Giancarlo Maestri**.

As shocking as Aldo Lado's **NIGHT TRAIN MURDERS** may have been, it offered some food for thought as a variation on Wes Craven's **LAST HOUSE ON THE LEFT** and exhibited cool, controlled direction even as the plot turned sadistic. Baldi's **TERROR EXPRESS** is a different trip altogether, speeding straight past the platforms of 'Style' and 'Ideas' and picking up its entire baggage at 'Sleaze Central'. Three delinquent young sadists board a late night train and terrorize the passengers, most of whom are scumbags or weirdos of one kind or another. The guard is running a prostitution racket with a resourceful whore, a criminal is being escorted in handcuffs by a would-be heroic cop, a sluttish wife and bitter husband (exploitation stalwarts Kerova and Venantini) score points off each other and an apparently normal family seethes with unspoken lust. Lascivious businessmen and a token pair of innocents - an elderly couple - make up the numbers. The action is unremittingly sexual, with an occasional twist of humiliation for variety as the male passengers fail dismally to quell the hoodlums' antics. Kerova pisses her husband off by letting one miscreant (De Mejo) screw her in the toilets, but suffers for this blow to male pride in the form of a gloatingly eroticized rape when a second thug forces himself into the action. A father who pays the train whore to wear his daughter's nightdress has his incestuous fantasy revealed to his wife and daughter. The latter eventually loses her virginity to one of the delinquents and gets to like it.



Exploitation doesn't come much dodgier than that, but somehow the film fails to really feast on its outrageous scenes. Despite the heights of bad taste scaled by Luigi Montefiori (aka George Eastman)'s script, the handling of the material often falls flat, and everything feels oddly matter-of-fact. I guess even rape and incest are liable to wilt in the hands of some directors. The dynamic possibilities offered by the setting are also thrown away, with ugly, static long shots showing the train moving at snail's pace through murky night time photography, incongruously spliced with a Giorgio Moroder-esque disco-synthesizer score. Dario Argento's *NONHOSONNO* this ain't: you might think that if the poetic but narratively challenged Jean Rollin can construct suspense on a train (see *GRAPES OF DEATH*) then surely anyone can. But action/Western specialist Baldi tries to get by on cynicism alone. There's no flame, no erotic charge to his provocations, it's all just a parade of shock motifs without any real passion, no matter how unhealthy.

A final burst of tastelessness shows the death by smothering of an asthmatic old woman and then in no time at all the three attackers are despatched. One is stabbed, one is decapitated and the other is pushed from the speeding train, but in each case the gory results are left offscreen. As if to underline the slapdash attitude he's shown throughout (or is it to make an existential statement?) Baldi finishes his film without the train reaching a destination. The remaining characters disappear into the night, apparently forgotten. Hackish contempt or arty refusal of narrative closure? Just don't wait for the National Film Theatre revival.

Stephen Thrower

TRÁGICA CEREMONIA EN VILLA ALEXANDER
aka **ESTRATTATO DAGLI ARCHIVI SEGRETI POLIZIA**
DI UNA CAPITALE EUROPEA

('Taken from the Secret Police Archives of a European Capital')
Spain/Italy, 1972

director: **Robert Hampton [Riccardo Freda]**
screenplay: **Mark Bianchi, Leonardo Martin, José G. Maesso**
director of photography: **Francisco Fraile**
editor: **Iolanda Benvenuti**
music: **Stelvio Cipriani**
producer: **José Gutiérrez Maesso**

cast: **Camille Keaton** (Jane), **Máximo Valverde** (Joe),
Giovanni Petrucci (Fred), **Tony Isbert** (Bill), **Luciana Paluzzi** (Lady Alexander), **Luigi Pistilli** (Lord Alexander),
Irina Demick (Bill's mother), **Pepe [José] Calvo** (Benzinaio),
Paul Müller (doctor), **Beny Deus** (Ferguson).

This uncharacteristically violent film is unquestionably Maestro Freda's most obscure horror title (it isn't listed or mentioned in his autobiography, *Divoratore di celluloidi*), yet there is nothing about it - no howling thumbsiness, no thematic inconsistency - to explain its maker's seeming neglect of it, or its inexplicably unknown status. Today, rumours abound that Freda was never truly interested in directing, that he once allowed his daughter to direct one of his films (most likely *IGUANA WITH A TONGUE OF FIRE*, 1971) under his remote 'supervision', yet *TRÁGICA CEREMONIA EN VILLA ALEXANDER* - never released in English-speaking countries, but now available in the USA on imported Spanish-language cassettes from Venezuela - is a film of immediate authority. Unsigned, the film's auteur would still be identifiable. Most anyone who snags a copy of *TRÁGICA CEREMONIA* at this late stage will likely be too grateful to judge it with a cold, objective eye. Its flaws, though flagrant, are somehow forgivable in light of its sudden appearance, but moreso on account of its textual revelations. A detailed account of the plot is perhaps advisable, considering the film's rarity.

Four young people - Bill, Joe, Fred and Jane - are enjoying their vacations together, yachting and camping. Before departing. Bill's present to his mother of a pearl necklace was nervously refused upon his announcement that it was previously owned by a possessed medium who died during an exorcismic ritual; he gives the necklace to Jane instead.



artwork for Riccardo Freda's *TRAGIC CEREMONY*

When she puts it on, she moves to kiss Bill but sees a blue-faced premonition of his corpse. She keeps the gift and wears it during a pitched-tent tryst with Joe, the sight of which triggers another memory in Bill - of seeing his mother cavorting in a bubble bath with a man young enough to be her son. On the long road back to Chelsea, their dune-buggy runs out of gas. They push the vehicle to a remote, old-fashioned service station, where an elderly attendant refuses to accept their travellers cheques, something he's never seen before. He gives them enough gas to reach the next town. It takes them only as far as the Villa Alexander, a large country estate built in another era, where a terrible storm forces them to request shelter. They are allowed to stay, but the three men are informed by Lord Alexander that guests are already present, so all but one of their guest rooms are full. They are invited to spend the evening in the kitchen, while Lady Alexander - a pensive beauty, in the style of Lucrezia Borgia - escorts a seemingly spellbound Jane into the vacant room, a bath and dry clothes.

That night, as the Alexanders host a well-attended Satanic ceremony in their cellar, Jane's necklace compels her to go downstairs. The necklace tries to strangle her on the stairs, but she breaks the strand resisting it. The ceremony promptly recruits her as its sacrifice. Her companions save her in the nick of time, Lady Alexander stabbing herself to death in the process. The sight of her blood triggers a frenzy within the coven, which gorily eradicates itself before the staggered expressions of the young people. They escape the villa in their dune buggy, eventually returning to the gas station they visited before - now inexplicably dusty and overgrown with weeds. They seek a hide-out at Bill's place, where his mother is caught 'entertaining.' She gives them money for a hotel. They swap the dune buggy - which the police may be looking for - for two motorcycles, which they drive to a villa Bill knows will be uninhabited: that of his mother's boyfriend. They break in and see the news reports of the massacre on TV, which compares the incident to the slaying of Sharon Tate by 'hippies.' That night, Joe finds Bill's blue-faced corpse in an upstairs closet. Later, a badly shaken Fred prepares to shave and sees in the mirror a female hand dragging the straight razor across his throat - he bleeds to death. Thinking the house possessed, Joe and Jane escape to the woods. They find solace in one another's arms until, finding her unusually passive, Joe lifts himself up from a kiss to find Jane's mouth hideously decomposed. Cycling away from the

vision, he crashes into a lake, where Jane - or a version of her, whose dark-circled eyes suggest possession - indifferently watches him drown. An epilogue finds Jane hospitalized in the Maggie Ross Mental Home, her hand clenched around a pearl preserved from the medium's broken necklace. Apparently, only this artifact has saved her from death. That night, as the pearl rolls out of her hand, the spirit of Lady Alexander rematerializes to complete her intended sacrifice, stabbing Jane to death. The spectre then glides toward a waiting limousine, where her directions are awaited by her chauffeur: the old man from the abandoned gas station.

(Incidentally, judging by the synopsis supplied by a Spanish pressbook, this Venezuelan cassette appears to be lacking at least one, possibly as many as three nude scenes featuring Keaton. The press-book mentions a bathing scene during which the possessed necklace attempts to strangle her, while two other love-making scenes - one of which segues to another character's tormented heavy breathing - are unusually circumspect by 1972 standards. Of course, it was the practise in Spain during Generalissimo Franco's reign to excise all nudity from imported feature films.)

As this synopsis reveals, all the Freda brushstrokes are apparent. Freda's filmed relationships tend to be strongly Oedipal: Margarethe Hichcock's indulgence in her husband's fantasies in **THE TERROR OF DR. HICHOCK** (1962) is strongly - in fact blindly - protective and maternal; **THE GHOST** (1963) is about the bittersweet tortures of a May-December relationship; Klaus Kinski's role in **DOUBLE FACE** (1969) is that of a 'kept' man, the marital mask of a rich wife with lesbian proclivities; and the young hero of Freda's last film to date, **MURDER OBSESSION** (1980), is the most overtly Oedipal of them all: his mother is an incestuous flirt, and they die in each other's arms in a chilling, red-cloaked profanation of Madonna with Child. **TRÁGICA CEREMONIA** presents us with an Oedipally obsessed male (Isbert), mangled by the clutches of another of Freda's cloying, sluttish, domineering women (Demick, his mother), while reaching out with pearls to a blank young woman (Keaton) whose mysterious, statuesque passivity he finds a compelling screen for his projections. In Freda's universe, the magical stillness Isbert sees in Keaton becomes precisely that quality which makes her vulnerable to supernatural intrusion.

A former sculptor and art critic, Freda reveals with obsessive regularity in his horror films - from the

necrophilic rituals of **HIGHCOCK**, to the finale of **THE GHOST**, to the voyeurism and cinephilia of **DOUBLE FACE** - an erotic preoccupation with paralysis, which invites the reminiscence of Freud's dictum that the presence of statues in dreams is indicative that the dreamer feels unloved. As with **MURDER OBSESSION**, which shares this film's seemingly insoluble melange of Golden Age classicism and contemporary violence, it is tempting to see **TRÁGICA CEREMONIA** as a transitional work or, to be less courteous, as a confession of an ageing Maestro's disorientation in what would seem to be a young man's field. Of course, neither film is transitional in the sense of changing focus or becoming bolder; **HIGHCOCK**, seen today, remains the most scandalous of horror films. The schism addressed by this film's sharply divided milieu is that of the active Present (represented by the four youths and their speed vehicles) and the paralysis of the Past (represented initially by Bill's mother, whose superstitions against accepting the haunted pearls seem to reflect her elsewhere expressed fears of growing old, and finally by the Villa Alexander and its nearby service station, both places fixed in time and space to await visitation). When these forces interact during the young people's stay at the villa, the guests seem to exchange energies with their settings, and Freda delights in the paradox of their rigid, mysteriously abstracted movements through stone halls lent life by the flickering of candelabras, the walls around their motionless stares alive with sighing drapes. It's a testimony to the virtuosity of these and other images - Keaton descending a stone staircase as transparent curtains billow like blue ghosts above her, or the attendant's unseen eyeglasses gathering dust in the weedy, abandoned service station - that they survive the ugly barrage of fisheye, vased and zoom lenses imposed upon them by Francisco Fraile, whose arsenal seems in direct conflict with Freda's usual refinement.

Unfortunately, a promising first third and serviceable middle culminate in a rushed climax that seems to unfold in reverse order. When Bill, theretofore the film's psychological focus, becomes the first casualty of the Alexander's curse, the film is left without a centre; when death comes next to Fred (whose strummed guitar emulates Cipriani's score), the film forfeits its Greek Chorus, its source of emotional commentary; the narcissistic Joe and enigmatic Jane are too vaguely developed to sustain the remaining minutes, and the film wastes no time in imploding upon

their vacuous core. As if realizing that his orchestra has grown too short of players to execute a satisfying crescendo, Freda rather desperately reprises the gory highlights from Villa Alexander (the head split by Lord Alexander's sword, the most spectacular effect, is shown another four times - once in underlit, out-take form). These structural frustrations diminish, however, in light of an altogether extraordinary final sequence in the psychiatric hospital, in which the ghost of Lady Alexander - a vaguely female fuzz of turquoise light - descends on our catatonic heroine like an exterminating angel, fulfilling her contract with Satan and then exiting through crowded halls unseen.

TRÁGICA CEREMONIA wedges nicely between the complementary concerns of **DOUBLE FACE** (in which jewelry is also used as a supernatural calling card) and **MURDER OBSESSION** - the aforementioned **IGUANA WITH A TONGUE OF FIRE** is a comparatively impersonal work. One can't help also reading into **TRÁGICA CEREMONIA** the almost forlorn influence of the films which Mario Bava, Freda's erstwhile cameraman, was making at the time. The gore murders at Villa Alexander - we see a head cleaved by a sword, a bullet exiting through a man's forehead, and a decapitated man's stump bleeding like a winepress - unreel like a reaction or challenge to the outrageous mayhem in Bava's **TWITCH OF THE DEATH NERVE** (1971, which also featured Luigi Pistilli), while the film's most compelling aspects (the timeless villa, the service station instantaneously overrun with weeds, and Pepe Calvo's demonic majordomo) virtually pay tribute to Bava's **LISA AND THE DEVIL** (1972), which Freda must have seen at Cannes that year.

For all its weaknesses, and its inherent sadnesses of lost time and the implications therein of lost friends, **TRÁGICA CEREMONIA EN VILLA ALEXANDER** has a persistency of theme which makes its unexpected appearance (nay, its existence!) akin to the discovery of a lost stanza from a precious, fragmentary poem; the words share the same metre and rhyme, yet they are new, sometimes deliciously so, and their recovery extends to the whole of the poet's work a new depth of complexity and height of accomplishment. If Freud was right in his suppositions about dreamed statues, it's worth appending to that thought the suggestion that every good movie makes statues of its audience. But to be frozen in space while one's mind accelerates is the gift bestowed by only the most

unique film-makers. With this sentiment in mind, I step forward from the gallery to offer Riccardo Freda the epitaph "He wrote of paralysis on moving paper..." along with the hope that he - who turned 81 this February 24th - never stands still long enough to claim it.

Tim Lucas

TRAS EL CRISTAL
aka **IN A GLASS CAGE**
Spain, 1986

Director: **Agustín Villaronga**
Screenplay: **Villaronga**, scripted by **Cristine Soler**
Director of photography: **Jaume Peracaula**
editor: **Raul Roman**
Music: **Javier Navarrete**
producer: **Teresa Enrich**

Cast: **Günter Meisner** (Klaus), **David Sust** (Angelo), **Marisa Paredes** (Griselda), **Gisela Echevarria** (Rena), **Imma Colomer**, **Josue Guasch** (boy), **Alberto Manzano** (boy), **Ricardo Carcelero** (Angelo as a boy), **David Cuspinera**.

Klaus (Gunter Meisner) is a paedophile whose war-time post as doctor in a Nazi concentration camp enabled him to torture and abuse young boys. After the war, living incognito in Spain, he again gives in to his depraved desires, until shame and despair drive him to an unsuccessful suicide attempt...

Now confined to his room and kept alive on an iron lung, he is ministered to by his resentful wife Griselda (Paredes) and her daughter Rena (Echevarria). Into this environment comes Angelo (Sust), a strange, handsome young man who offers his services as a nurse. Against Griselda's judgement, Klaus insists that the visitor be allowed to take the post. A perverse relationship develops between Angelo and Klaus. Angelo disconnects then re-connects the iron-lung's power supply to demonstrate his complete power over his transfixed 'employer'. He reveals to Klaus that he has read the man's diaries, detailing his sadistic sexual abuse of young boys in the Nazi camps. In a state of feverish arousal he reads from the diaries, masturbating onto the old man's face. After a violent row with Griselda, Angelo stalks her through the labyrinthine villa. He murders her and drags

the corpse into Klaus's room, draping it face down on the iron lung casing. Some days later, Angelo persuades a young Spanish boy from a nearby village to return to the villa with him. In front of the reluctantly fascinated Klaus he orders the boy to strip, then binds him in a chair. Reciting from the diaries, Angelo murders the boy by injecting a syringe of gasoline into his heart. Soon, other boys are being brought to the room...

TRAS EL CRISTAL achieves its nightmare intensity without extreme goriness or carnage, choosing instead to draw sadistic sexual fantasies from the depths of the human soul. Villaronga dwells on the unnerving details of child murder, obsessively charting a taboo considered by many to be just too offensive to serve as subject matter for a film. Such aspirations are not unique in the cinema, in both its 'art' and 'exploitation' forms. Claims are often made for the particular darkness of 'extreme' films, but once in a while the viewer is taken on a journey leading genuinely further out - or further in. Cinema has given us plenty of morality tales about 'innocence destroyed', 'childhood corrupted', and 'the evils of unrestrained power': but the transgressive desire to enact these scenarios is rarely given such an acute and uncompromising face. Pasolini showed this blackness of the soul, his **SALÒ, OR THE 120 DAYS OF SODOM** standing as one of the cinema's most unflinching experiments. Working with similar material, Spanish director Agustín Villaronga gambles with bad taste, dispensing with **SALÒ**'s neutral severity by adding genre thrills which implicate the voyeuristic drives of the audience. The savagery of Pasolini's film is, if not joyless, then joylessly presented, deliberately avoiding the techniques which might mobilise audience sympathy for the victims, or the torturers. **TRAS EL CRISTAL**, on the other hand, uses the 'excitement' of a loose horror film format to suggest our complicity with abomination.

The film was initially shown twice in the UK, once at the London Film Festival in 1987 and again the same year at a lesbian/gay film festival on Tyneside, where it met with some considerable anger and disapproval from the audience. There were strenuous objections to a film about a murderous paedophile being shown at a lesbian and gay festival. This may seem an over-reaction, but in the 1980s and 1990s gay men were all too often perniciously associated with child molestation in prejudiced and homophobic British tabloids like *The Sun* and *The News of the World*. (Of course statistics show that by far the greatest proportion of

such crimes are committed by married men, usually within the family). Nevertheless, the malicious misrepresentations of bigots aside, this is a film that deserves to be seen by audiences irrespective of sexuality.

Stylistically, **TRAS EL CRISTAL** combines the more decadent strain of European art movie (Visconti for example) with the slasher/horror genre. A comparison could be made to Fassbinder (and a film like **TENDERNESS OF THE WOLVES**, which Fassbinder produced but declined to direct), but whilst the German director's psychodramas are often cruel, he never confronted audiences quite as shockingly as this. The film has a hypnotic atmosphere, amplified by the rhythmic 'woosh/clunk' of the iron-lung mechanism clearly audible throughout the key dialogue scenes in Klaus's room. The music, it has to be said, is a less successful melding of morbid-romantic orchestral themes with a clichéd early-eighties horror synthesizer. But it's the cold early-medical ambience invoked by the sound of the iron-lung that brings Angelo's readings from the diaries to appalling life in the viewer's mind; just as Angelo's gradually mounting excitement, the increasingly resonant timbre of his voice, suggests it is happening for him. The camera lingers on David Sust's face: on his mouth which, speaking the feverish, sadistic text, possesses a calculated erotic charge - the angel speaking of death.

TRAS EL CRISTAL's murder scenes are almost unbearable to watch, as much for their lingering build-ups as for what they show. Whilst traditional suspense is being brought into play, the extreme situations overload the suspense mechanics in a way that makes conventional narrative pleasure hard to sustain. Villaronga seems to be saying that these games of suspense are more than just parlour tricks. By engaging our feelings, he denies us the distance from which to define the film as merely 'about Evil' - instead, through our taste for vicarious sensation, we must confront the knowledge that the savagery of murderers and fascists is present, in some form, in us all. In doing so he leads from the front, trying to face, without flinching, something terrible in the human animal: the negative erotic feelings which might lead one to take pleasure in destroying a child.

Angelo's first murder stands as a pivotal set-piece not easily forgotten (it prompted a flood of walk-outs at **TRAS EL CRISTAL**'s London Film Festival screening in 1987 and left me on the verge of fainting). It's structured as a remorseless slide from unease, to realisation of imminent horror, on into a kind of destructive orgasm - followed by a drawn-out,

appalling subsidence. Complicating matters further is the beauty introduced into the situation. Angelo (handsome, stern but sensuous) and his young victim (clean-limbed, incomprehending and without fear) are framed within a sumptuous *mise-en-scène*. Angelo's way of killing applies a precise aestheticism. A syringe is produced from a red velvet-lined carrying case, and the effect (strangely similar to **DEAD RINGERS**) is to arouse in the viewer the morbid dread of erotic surgery, further reinforced by the victim's restraint in leather bonds, essential to sado-erotic surgical fantasy. Such horror/arousal revolves around the precision of the needle, in this instance a threatening antique appliance of steel and glass.

Angelo recites Klaus's account of his atrocities whilst using the syringe to draw gasoline from the iron-lung's fuel tank. The highly charged atmosphere of elaborate sexual role-play between Klaus and Angelo edges slowly into real horror (with the Lynchian mechanical pumping sound of the iron lung machinery making things worse) as Angelo strides over to his young victim. A close-up of the needle entering the brown, unblemished skin of the boy's chest. Then the depression of the plunger, squirting petrol into his heart. A cold precision invading the warmth of the flesh. A shot of the man in his glass and metal cylinder... and poison liquid in a glass and metal cylinder. As intravenous drug-users might say, a very dirty hit. Even then, there's more to cope with - instead of dispensing with the victim after the immediate shock of the injection (as a slasher movie would, once the axe or knife has done its work), Villaronga subjects us to a long minute of the dying boy's death-throes, a child gasping and convulsing as the poison destroys him. Both the minimal but convincing special effects and frighteningly realistic performances contribute to the shock.

The next killing is a further assault on the audience, this time because our expectations are so bleak, as the child victim is stripped and then forced by Angelo to sing to the old man (in imitation of one of the death-camp boys) before having his throat slashed. If I had one anxiety about this film it would be to do with the young actors playing the victims. Their terrifyingly plausible performances in contexts which skate to the edge of the intolerable leave you wondering how they were insulated from the traumatic reverberations of their scenes.

The film fails to move on from the lull that follows in the wake of its intense murder scenes, and the last quarter of the



Agustín Villaronga's remarkable and disturbing *TRAS EL CRISTAL*

film is slightly anticlimactic. But with its final, inevitable disclosure that Angelo had been molested by his Nazi captive as a child, **TRAS EL CRISTAL** locks its characters into a closed, claustrophobic circle of abuse, one which burns its way into your memory.

The subject matter is strikingly similar to Stephen King's excellent 1981 novella, *Apt Pupil*, filmed in 1998 by Bryan (THE USUAL SUSPECTS) Singer and starring Ian McKellen and Brad Renfro. The Singer film, however, was a failure, an unintentionally comical attempt to illuminate the dangerous allure of Nazi decadence. Whether or not Villaronga was aware of King's story, **TRAS EL CRISTAL** is the definitive cinematic exploration of their shared themes.

Agustin Villaronga was born in Mallorca, Spain, in 1953, and worked as an actor and director in the theatre before directing his first film, **ANTA MUJER**, in 1976. After a period spent working on projects for television, he hit the international film scene with **TRAS EL CRISTAL**, followed by **MOON CHILD** in 1989, **99.9** in 1998 and **EL MAR** in 2000. His most recent film at the time of writing, **ARO TOLBUKHIN**, was completed in 2002.

Villaronga's sensibility is deeply rooted in Catholicism but he is also drawn to magic and the paranormal. Alongside its fascination with fascist abuses and child-murder, a spiritual dimension casts **TRAS EL CRISTAL** as a story of angels and demons, locked in a metaphysical battle for the soul. It is said that Death takes a form determined by the actions and beliefs of the one who dies. Klaus, immobilised between life and death, must face an Angel of Death at once beautiful and vengeful, a handsome punisher force-feeding evil pleasures to a man grown sick with his own defilements.

David Sust, a 22-year old newcomer to the cinema when the film was released, went on to appear in Villaronga's **MOON CHILD**. Gunther Meisner, who died in 1994, had previously appeared in **THE BOYS FROM BRAZIL**, **FUNERAL IN BERLIN** and Bergman's **THE SERPENT'S EGG**. Perhaps the best known member of the cast is Marisa Paredes, who has appeared regularly in Pedro Almodovar's films, including **HIGH HEELS**, **THE FLOWER OF MY SECRET** and **ALL ABOUT MY MOTHER**.

As a film about the cycle of abuse, **TRAS EL CRISTAL** is to be approached with caution. For some, the sick relationship depicted will seem safely alien, for others it will resonate in mental chambers they thought were out of reach. Dealing with the extremes of sexual fantasy and the horrors

of acting them out, **TRAS EL CRISTAL** is a film of great courage, exploring a very difficult subject within the bounds of responsible intelligence. Shocking, but much more than a cheap thrill, this deeply unsettling work stays in the mind long after more exploitative horror films have faded away.

Stephen Thrower

L'UOMO, LA DONNA, LA BESTIA

aka **SPELL, DOLCE MATTATOIO**

Italy, 1977

writer/director: **Alberto Cavallone**

director of photography: **Giovanni Bonicelli**

music: **Claudio Tollino**

cast: **Jane Avril, Martial Boschero, Paola Montenero, Giovanni De Angelis, Angela Doria, Emmanuelle Guarino, Macha Magall, Aldo Massaro, Antonia Mea, Agostino Pilastrì.**

This extraordinary film is difficult to describe without resorting to comparisons with other marginal, extremist works. It shares qualities with such outlandish items as Giulio Questi's **DEATH LAID AN EGG**, Silvio Narizzano's **THE SKY IS FALLING/THE SKY IS FALLING** and Fernando Arrabal's **VIVA LA MUERTE**, in its obsessional mélange of human and animal orifices, birth and reproduction, sex and dead meat, repression and wild expression. A casual attitude to the introduction of hallucinatory elements also strongly suggests Buñuel (**THE EXTERMINATING ANGEL, TRISTANA**). Yet the film diverges from these more overtly anarchic comparisons thanks to a melancholic streak that appears to mourn the breakdown of conventional morality. Caught between the stifling 'normality' of country life and the messy products of liberation, Cavallone's pessimistic film views both options with horror and revulsion.

It's festival time in a small town. The streets reverberate with clanging bells and fevered chatter. But there's a shadow at the feast. For all this revelry, no real joy colours the film's parade of liberties. Instead there's gloom, alienation, madness. We're in the country, somewhere in Southern Italy. Luciana, the disturbed wife of a withdrawn communist artist, locks herself in the toilet and blankly

drinks water from the bowl. Alfonso, the town's butcher, watches mesmerized as young women walk past his shop. Frustrated, he retreats to his meat locker and screws a side of beef, licking distractedly at the dead flesh. Elsewhere a woman breaks off from kissing a man in order to lick an erotic drawing (again, very Buñuel). A depressed housewife is driven crazy by the weird snores of her husband. A woman inserts a cow's eyeball into her vagina, suggesting vulnerability of vision as well as a threatening 'view' of female sexuality. Fairground footage erupts into the film with a vengeance, intercut with a party where many men and one woman dance in the nude. Gangs of feral boys wrestle half-naked in the street. The atmosphere is Pasolini via Pupi Avati.

A quiet young lad, in adulation of an older youth, helps his hero back into town after seeing him get beaten by a jealous husband, who suspects the lad of seducing his wife. The younger boy naively takes the battered teen to recover at Luciana's house. He leaves him there, unaware that Luciana has only just been prevented from cutting off the maid's nipples with scissors, after bashing her unconscious with a hair-dryer. Day and night get confused, as do the roles of younger and older generations, and Luciana begins an increasingly wild sex session with the young visitor. Their erotic abandon leads to a graphically shocking conclusion. As the youth kisses her ass she suddenly shifts over his face, force-feeds it to him and then stabs him to death. The artist husband stands in the shadows taking photographs. The film concludes with the younger boy walking away from the house, desolate and alone.

The extremities of this tale are redolent of the Panic Theatre Aktions, where a similar obsession with meat and defecation was explored, leading to the unforgettable artworks of Rudolph Schwarzkogler, Gunter Brüs and Herman Nitsch. If we were looking at a film made in the 1990s, we might expect these influences to be incorporated in a self-consciously artificial way, as with the use of artists like Joel Peter Witkin in the video imagery of Goth shock-rockers like Marilyn Manson. Cavallone's film belongs to a different era though - whilst it is undoubtedly derivative at some levels, there's a far less self-congratulatory feel to the appropriations, suggesting that the choice of imagery was made not to feed the director's self-image but because at some level he was unable to resist.

But whereas the Panic group's activities were meant to shatter the norms of representation by creating a liberating

filth and beautiful ugliness, Cavallone seems less sure about the radical value of such manoeuvres. The sad tale of the boy whose crush on a slightly older boy is literally shat upon by political, erotic and artistic nihilism suggests a concern with the effects of one generation's revolution on the development of the next. The surrealist frenzy of liberation - sexual, Sadean and willfully absurd - is juxtaposed with the assumed needs of children for security, love and stable role models. Whether Cavallone's creation of such a disordered world is complex enough to mitigate against this provocative near-reactionary opposition is a question that will have to await an English-language version of his remarkable film.

Stephen Thrower

LA VENERE D'ILLE
aka **THE VENUS OF ILLE**
Italy, 1978

directors: **Mario Bava, Lamberto Bava**
screenplay: **Lamberto Bava, Cesare Garboli**,
from "*La Venus d'ille*" by Prosper Mérimée
director of photography: **Nino Celeste**
editor: **Fernanda Papa**
music: **Ubaldo Continiello**
producer: **Franca Franco**

cast: **Daria Nicolodi** (Clara De Peyhorrade), **Marc Porel** (Matthieu), **Fausto di Bella** (Alfonso), **Mario Maranzana** (Mr De Peyhorrade), **Adriana Innocenti** (Mes De Peyhorrade), **Diana de Curtis** (Maria), **Francesco di Federico** (guide).

Originally published in an 1837 edition of *La Revue des Deux Mondes*, Mérimée's story was adapted for television by Polish film-maker Janusz Majewski in the late sixties. Bava's version, which sadly proved to be his last completed work as a director, was commissioned by R.A.I. as part of a series entitled *I Giochi del diavolo - storie fantastiche dell'ottocento*. Like the previous year's **SHOCK**, this exquisite telefilm was a collaborative project with his son Lamberto, and once again utilised the considerable talents of the delicately beautiful Nicolodi. Co-written by the award-winning Garboli, it emerges as one of the Italian maestro's most consistently literate pictures, revealing a sense of refinement

which was often smothered by the baroque flamboyance of his big-screen ventures.

Although set in France, **LA VENERE D'ILLE** carries the full-bodied flavour of Italy. As in many of Pupi Avati's films, with which it bears some charming stylistic similarities, there is a detailed depiction of the preparation and consumption of food. The Italian people's well deserved reputation as generous hosts, and their profound love for feasting and celebration, is vividly illustrated in the elaborate wedding festivities towards the end of the movie. However, in keeping with the disturbing undertones of Merimée's tale, the party atmosphere is menacingly tainted with a sense of impending tragedy...

The narrative is carried by Matthieu (Porel), a young Parisian who comes to stay at the country house of Monsieur de Peyhorrade (Maranzana), an antiques dealer who has discovered a bronze statue of Venus buried at the foot of one of his olive trees. The statue has silver encrusted eyes and a mysterious Latin inscription on its base: "Cave amantum" - beware the lovers. By the time of Matthieu's arrival, it has already been the cause of a serious accident, crushing the leg of a villager who was helping to unearth it.

Monsieur de Peyhorrade's boorish son Alfonso (di Bella) is about to marry Clara (Nicolodi), a fragile young woman from the neighbouring estate. On the day of the wedding he is dismayed to see some Spanish mule drivers beating the local youths at a game of tennis. Determined to defend his honour, he removes his coat and rushes to join in, but the ornate ring intended for his future wife makes it difficult for him to hold his racket properly. Placing it on the third finger of the Venus, which stands at the edge of the court, he resumes his game and scores a resounding victory for his village. Later on at the church, he realises that he has forgotten the ring and quickly substitutes another one before Clara has chance to notice.

That night, during the lavish supper given at Ille, Alfonso returns from the garden in a state of agitation. He confesses to Matthieu that he went to retrieve the real wedding ring, but was unable to remove it from the finger of the statue. In the early hours of the morning, Venus inexplicably comes to life and enters the house in order to take her rightful place as Alfonso's bride. Terror-stricken, Clara cowers in the corner of the bedroom as the cursed statue shatters her husband's body in its deadly metallic embrace.

Remaining faithful to both the plotline and mood of Merimée's story, Bava skilfully avoids any potentially

awkward moments by refusing to show the animated Venus. Instead, by relying on some inspired lighting trickery, and a virtuoso use of the subjective camera, he effectively manages to suggest her menacing presence. Alfonso's bizarre death is represented by a series of sickening cracks on the soundtrack - as the camera records Clara's horrified reaction - recalling the masterful use of sound in **WHIP AND THE BODY**. Teamed once more with dell'Orco, who provided the oppressively cluttered Gothic settings for the incredible **KILL BABY.. KILL!**, Bava is able to create maximum tension by exploiting the possibilities of the decor, allowing the camera to caress a carved wooden gargoyle and voluminous lace curtains. Celeste's subtly muted Technicolor photography is excellent throughout, but the scenes which take place in candlelight - with flickering shadows bringing the heavily furnished rooms to life - are especially impressive. Continiello's score is also faultlessly employed, with the achingly beautiful piano theme often merging with the abrasively percussive strings which re-surfaced two years later - in a much more Hermannesque arrangement - in Bava Jnr's superlative **MACABRE**.

As she had demonstrated so forcefully in the gruesome **SHOCK**, Nicolodi is particularly adept at portraying hysteria and creeping psychosis. In **LA VENERE D'ILLE** she is given ample opportunity to exercise the full range of her abilities, and for once her efforts are not hampered by indifferent dubbing. The conflicting Madonna/Whore image of women which Bava had interpreted through Barbara Steele's dual role of Ase/Katia in **BLACK SUNDAY** is here given a neat twist: Clara's counterpart is a supposedly inanimate object made of bronze. Only the sensitive Matthieu appears to notice the resemblance, and his sketches of the two gradually merge into a single representation. Nicolodi's brittle performance handles the nuances of Clara's ambiguous character with consummate ease, and is enhanced by the expertly judged contributions of Porel and di Bella. Porel's almost religious good looks are the perfect counterpoint for di Bella's virile earthiness, providing a strong visualisation of Clara's dilemma of duty to one and attraction to the other. Veteran character actor Maranzana is his usual professional self, even though his Monsieur de Peyhorrade bears more than a passing similarity to his bumbling lawyer in Lucio Fulci's Edwige Fenech sex comedy **LA PRETORA!**

Little seen outside Italy, and not - as far as I know - existing in either a dubbed or subtitled version, **LA**

VENERE D'ILLE ranks with the very best of Bava's cinematic output. It is also one of his few films where the script is as accomplished as his images on the screen. Personal favourite moments include Matthieu gazing into the moonlit garden from his bedroom window, as two young boys dare each other to touch the baleful statue, and a wonderful tracking shot in which the camera passes behind a row of hung poultry in a kitchen lit like a Dutch painting. The picture closes with the statue sinking into a fire in front of a vivid pink background, evoking fond memories of Bava's surreal colour sense in the sixties classics that earned him his reputation. "Un capolavoro", as the Italians would say...

Mark Ashworth

VENUS IN FURS

aka **VENUS IM PELZ/BLACK ANGEL/**
PAROXISMUS .. PUÒ UNA MORTA RIVIVERE PER AMORE?
Spain/UK/West Germany/Italy, 1969

director: **Jess Franco**

screenplay: **Jess Franco, Malvin Wald, Milo G. Cuccia, Carlo Fadda**

director of photography: **Angelo Lotti**

editors: **Henry Batista, Stanley Frazen, Mike Dozen, Nicholas Wentworth**

music: **Manfred Mann & Mike Hugg**

producer: **Harry Alan Towers**

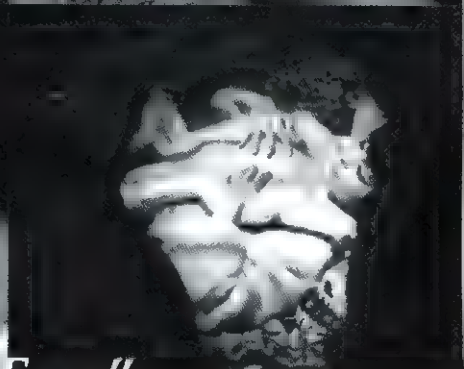
cast: **James Darren** (Jimmy Logan), **Barbara McNair** (Rita), **Maria Rohm** (Wanda Reed), **Klaus Kinski** (Ahmed Kortobawi), **Dennis Price** (Percival Kapp), **Margaret Lee** (Olga), **Jesus Franco** (musician), **Adolfo Lastretti** (Inspector Kaplan), **Paul Müller** (Hermann), **Mirella Pamphili**.

A beach near Istanbul. Jimmy Logan (Darren) digs his trumpet from the sand where he'd buried it, for reasons he can't remember... wandering aimlessly at the sea's edge he finds a body washed up by the tide. To his consternation, he recognises the mutilated female corpse of Wanda (Rohm), a beautiful young woman he once saw being raped and killed during an S&M party... her killers were Ahmed (Kinski), a millionaire playboy, an art dealer named Kapp (Price) and Olga, a fashion photographer (Lee) After witnessing the

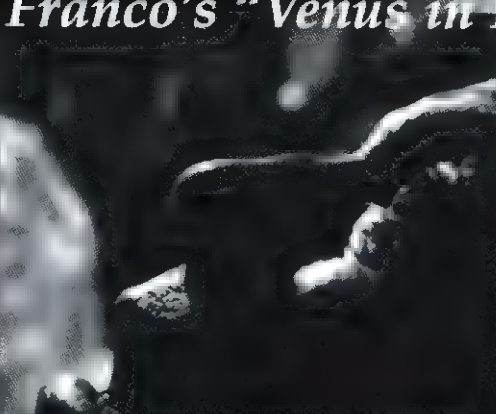
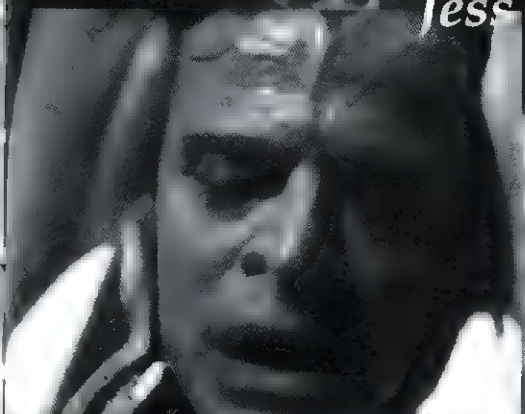
murder, Jimmy fled to Rio de Janeiro where he took refuge in a steady but lifeless relationship with Rita (McNair), a black nightclub singer. This fragile stability is shattered when Wanda turns up at a jazz concert he is playing... events slide ambiguously between memories of the past and situations of the present... Jimmy follows Wanda out of the club to an ornately furnished house and makes love to her in a delirious haze... subsequent scenes depict Wanda's revenge on her three killers, as she seduces first Kapp, then Olga and finally Ahmed to their deaths... at the height of their obsessive relationship, Jimmy and Wanda are chased by the police, who may have connected them with the murders... Wanda takes refuge in a cemetery and disappears... searching for her among the tombs, Jimmy finds her mink coat draped over a headstone bearing her name... in a red-walled room, her three killers stand mesmerised, gazing at the dead body of Wanda lying naked on the floor... back on the beach, we see Jimmy pull another familiar body from the water...

There are those of us who have a peculiar regard for Jess Franco, Spain's No.1 purveyor of demented sex and violence. For such twisted souls, **VENUS IN FURS** offers confirmation of what was already suspected - Franco is capable of greatness, and worthy of the 'artist' status denied him when only his cheapskate efforts are visible. It should also surprise and delight more sceptical viewers, and may confound those who have condemned this prolific director as a cynical, exploitative inept. **VENUS IN FURS** is an icy, shimmering jewel of a film, in which photography, music, editing and art design repeatedly coalesce into breathtaking sequences of morbidly glacial beauty. There are flaws, but let's leave them aside for a while - the first overwhelming impression is of a deadly, seductive dream-world, populated by confused, lonely and, of course, eventually doomed characters. Their decadent, high-society emptiness leads to acts of rape and murder, propelling them from their illusory anomie into a death spiral riddled with guilt and despair. Franco's oft-remarked love of jazz could be said to govern his approach to the 'plot'. Linear narrative is gone, replaced by a series of cycles and variations, as the three libertines responsible for the S&M murder of Wanda fall prey to the haunting incarnation of their guilt, in the form of her reproachful return from the dead.

What narrative thread there is stems from James Darren's character, who wanders through the film in a constant state of confusion. **VENUS IN FURS**, like Dario



Jess Franco's "Venus in Furs"



Argento's **INFERNO**, is a film in which one could say that 'looking for a narrative' actually *becomes* the narrative. Darren's perplexed expression as he staggers through a series of impossible events recalls Leigh McCloskey's similar look of bewilderment in Argento's remarkable film, and both **VENUS IN FURS** and **INFERNO** present their protagonists with the same ultimate horror at the centre of their cinematic maze - death (an old favourite, and who can argue?) But whereas **INFERNO** allows its young lead to escape the infernal building in which the confrontation takes place, Franco morbidly locks his lead character in a perceptual hall-of-mirrors, where even his own death becomes a reflection from which there is no escape. (**INFERNO** elaborates more provocatively its theme of searching for the narrative; for instance, the scene where McCloskey spies ants crawling from a hole in the floorboards of the room in which he is locked, recalling **UN CHIEN ANDALOU**'s ants emerging from a hole in someone's hand. Raymond Durnat interprets Bunuel's image as "a renewal of phallic desire." When McCloskey experiences this 'renewal' after a long, frustrating period of confusion and passivity, he excavates the ant-hole and disappears into the netherworld beneath - we get the dizzying impression of a character constructing, *writing in* so to speak, the next steps of narrative... like a staircase appearing gradually in a void... But to come back up the staircase, through the floorboards, past the ants and the Andalusian dog, and back to **VENUS IN FURS**...)

Franco allies images of imprisonment with a warped evocation of desire, as Wanda destroys her tormentors and ensnares Darren through the application of her seductive physical charms. Returning to haunt the murderous trio draped casually in a luxurious mink coat, with panties and black stockings beneath, she effectively lures them to destroy themselves through their insatiable desire to possess her again; even as they realise what this yearning for a dead woman implies, they're unable to resist.

Of the three revenge set-pieces, perhaps the most powerfully hypnotic is Dennis Price's astonishing demise. Wanda appears in his bedroom, tantalising him by slipping seamlessly from an apparently physical presence on his bed to a series of tauntingly arousing reflections in the numerous large mirrors in the room. Her unattainable image drives the elderly man to a frenzy, which culminates in a final agonised spasm of frustration, an inverse orgasm which destroys him. All this is achieved without dialogue

(as are most of the film's best scenes), and is driven instead with gradually strangulating intensity by a brilliant music score, as indispensable and remorselessly constructed as Bernard Herrmann's compositions for Scorsese's **TAXI DRIVER**. It's that good, and I'd cite it as a fine rebuke to those who argue that the best film music is that which the audience doesn't notice. This musical vortex finally implodes on cue and, in the *coup-de-grâce*, an outrageously mannered vocalist (Manfred Mann, God help us!) belts out the phrase "*Venus in furs will be smiling!*" over the vacuum left by the music's end.

Literary sleazos of a patient nature who have actually read Sacher-Masoch's *Venus in Furs* may be disappointed that Franco's movie has a rather tangential relationship to that notorious art/porn classic. Apart from Kinski's elaborate sadist-to-masochist reversal scene, it would seem that Franco has dredged the contorted outpourings of his own mind to make this bizarre film. In an interview published in the British exploitation journal *Shock Xpress*, Franco stated that the film's title was imposed on him by the distributor, replacing his own preference of **BLACK ANGEL** (someone had obviously been listening to a lot of Velvet Underground!).

But whilst Franco's film may lack the discipline and complexity of Masoch's explorations, it does contain sequences of incredible visual power, realised with an assured fluidity beyond most practitioners in the sex or horror genres. Numerous devices are employed to achieve visual and temporal dislocations - slow motion (the click-frame variety also used to great effect in Derek Jarman's more esoteric work), various colour filters, rippling effects like waves of treacle dripping over the lens, extreme low angles, close ups with wide-angle lenses - all are applied to impressively controlled effect and, surprisingly, whilst it's undeniably of it's era, the film never overbalances into mere psychedelic camp.

Flaws should be noted though, forgivable though they are - the male lead's ineptly written voice-over can be grating (and it does overstate the twist ending rather...), but they contribute a few brief moments of unintentional humour without seriously detracting from the atmosphere. (Particularly funny is his remark about the S&M orgy he sees - "*Man, it was a wild scene... but if they wanted to go that rough, it was their bag!*"). The street carnivals of Rio de Janeiro outstay their welcome by several minutes, although at first they are used well to show how Darren's obsession

with Wanda isolates him from even the most emphatic of surroundings. His half-hearted relationship with black singer Rita slows the already languorous pace down too much at times, and her resignation when she realises her lover is obsessed with a dead woman makes her rather too wet as a character, except for the end credits when she performs the title song with some gusto. But with scenes such as Margaret Lee's slow suicide in blue-tinted bath-water (trickles of red from her gouged wrists seep over her breasts where her arms are crossed, mingling with the water), and her melancholic words "*I wanted so much to explain what was in my heart... feelings... when we did those awful things*", the film achieves a funereal beauty, so it's easy to disregard the elements that don't work. Franco himself regards **VENUS IN FURS** as one of his two or three most accomplished films, and rightly so. About as far away from **WANDA THE WICKED WARDEN** as you could wish, **VENUS IN FURS** qualifies as one of the treasures of Franco's career.

Stephen Thrower

VIDEO/VOID

an ongoing experimental video project by **David Larcher**

The mental features discussed as analytical are, in themselves, but little susceptible of analysis: we appreciate them only in their effects. - Edgar Allan Poe

Occasionally an aesthetic experience comes along that matters. Already four years old, David Larcher's VIDEO/VOID project is the best experimental video this writer has experienced to date. Immersed in a world of communications, encryption and ceaseless signification. In our increasingly technological lives, certain states or emotions remain incompatible with the format. Though, in rare instances, their effects can be detected in some of its products. **The use of sound, image and voice as a series of parallel and interconnecting texts, provides us with a rigorous puzzle. Its structure is enigmatic, elliptically incomplete. The viewer experiences the film like an hallucination. No characters, no dialogue, no plot... A work of art in the age of digital reproduction.**

"...The mathematical object with which quantum mechanics represents the states of physical systems is referred to as the wave

function... Particle wave functions have nonzero values in those areas of space in which a position measurement might ultimately find the particle... , the observation 'collapses' the wave function into either region A or region B."

In other words, we trace the dragon... subject/object dissolving, one to another... endlessly. **VIDEO/VOID presents us with a plethora of abstract and shifting concepts, koans and calculus, accompanied by the drift of a dissociative monologue.** Science has also reappraised fixed notions of truth/falsity. Quantum mechanics introduces uncertainty to science's major truth claim, objectivity. The activity of whatever is observed will to some degree be determined by the act of observation. Pre-existing factors, established elsewhere, define the conclusions we can draw in a given situation.

Walter Benjamin wrote that a medium was not truly radical unless it calls its own existence into question. After all, new media haven't always existed. Nor should they necessarily continue to exist.

Being one with the "O"... The basis of much Western thought rests upon such oppositional, hierarchical distinctions. Binary oppositions are a way of seeing - like ideologies. We know that ideologies draw sharp distinctions between conceptual opposites (such as truth and falsity, cause and effect, centre and periphery, mind and body). The primary concept among these is that between presence and absence (life and death). Are these ideas really drawn together through opposition, or are they simply equal terms in a system of differences? Daisetz Suzuki pointed out that Zen's non-duality arose in China, because of problems encountered in translating India's Buddhist texts. Indian words which defined opposing concepts did not exist in Chinese. Looking for an Indian precedent, Chinese patriarchs chose the Flower Sermon of the Buddha, a sermon in which no word was spoken.

In this way, VIDEO/VOID is an incredible experience. The first issue, or 'trailer', examines the televisual medium by digitally isolating and re-presenting video's little deaths... its apparent absences... Interference, dropout, raw signal; the stuff that's normally excluded.

The zero... Constructing with holes fascinated early 20th Century mathematicians. One such structure is the Sierpinski carpet. Made by removing the central ninth of a square, then cutting out the centres of the eight smaller squares remaining - ad infinitum. Its three-dimensional analogue is the Menger sponge, a solid-looking lattice that

has infinite surface area, yet zero volume. Always there but never in place, nothing is ever fully present. Digital technology, based upon binary on/off, oppositional distinctions, reflects wider cultural concerns.

Contiguously the soundtrack echoes the same concerns - the roar and crunch of the processor, memory extended and switching. The void in the video is perhaps like Koestler's *Ghost in the Machine*. With this material Larcher constructs elaborate virtual tableaux. The viewer journeys through increasingly fragmented scapes. Zeno's paradoxes refuting motion are hinted at by arrows and signposts marked 'VOID'. [The paradox proposes that a flying arrow is at rest, because at any one moment it occupies no more space than its physical dimensions, as objects at rest do]. We are assured that 'It is the signposts that move.' Referents diminish, we are free floating, adrift.

The drug numbs the entire surface area of the body... Profoundly altered spatial and temporal awareness is the result. The effects confirm certain models of perception. The picture one 'sees' does not exist as a complete representation somewhere, it is an emergent property of the system. The system runs in realtime. This picture results from the interaction of densely populated neurological communities. As the sense of physical perimeter dissolves, the dynamic process that disperses our sense of the world across vast cortical areas is attenuated, made extensive. The user experiences this effect as the creation of a vacuum in the psyche through which s/he is propelled. Saturated in the burn-out of unprioritised data, are we seeing the hole picture yet?

Lacan suggests however, there are anchoring points... And suddenly nothing happened... Hand-held camera, the aural bruise of wind on microphone, the natural sign... Where are we? Larcher has found a town, somewhere in France, called Void. [A drugfucked pilgrimage?] The video ruptures and we are in a Void, one of many maybe.

A friend scored ketamine from a bent vet... So the first time we shot it up it was pure... And strong... Immediate inability to remove the syringe... The K-hole (as it's known) is a place of accelerated impedance. Symbol; Z [zzzzzz...]

This film is also [so Anna Thew informs me] a meditation on the Buddhist concepts of the void - a mental space free from association but in which the consideration of objects can be projected. Though conversations with others have resulted in endless interpretations: a simulation of the collapsing wave-packet... the testcard on acid... the discovery of the Videodrome signal! This is in part the

film's strength and also its seductive allure. By foregrounding the absences, aporia is introduced - spaces through which meaning can emerge and escape us. The medium is the subject and object of enquiry.

Someone keeps making sense no matter what you don't.

Televised in 1994, VIDEO/VOID caused quite a stink with Channel 4's technicians. An added strategy of the piece is its flagrant waiving of the technical regulations defining broadcast quality. Exceeding brightness, contrast, colour and every other unimaginable standard, VIDEO/VOID presents a break in its relationship with all other programmes broadcast, and highlights the subtler levels of control at work in the televisual field.

Thirty spokes share one hub. Adapt the nothing therein to the purpose in hand, and you will have the use of the cart. Knead clay in order to make a vessel. Adapt the nothing therein to the process in hand, and you will have the use of the vessel. Cut out doors and windows in order to make a room. Adapt the nothing therein to the purpose in hand and you will have the use of the room. - Lao Tzu

David Larcher's work is not given the recognition, in this country, it deserves. I am reluctant to write anything more about this, as to describe is also to limit. VIDEO/VOID displays an outstanding ability to juggle the abstruse and the popular. Its constellation of sound and image is worthy of lengthy individual appraisal. However, enquiry at the Arts Council reveals there are no articles or features on the subject. Here's to nothing.

Foxy Gifford

WILD BEASTS

aka BELVE FEROCI/ THE WILD BEASTS WILL GET YOU! / SAVAGE BEASTS
Italy, 1983

writer/director: Franco E. Prosperi

director of photography: Guglielmo Mancori

editor: Mario Morra

music: Daniele Patucchi

producer: Federico Prosperi

cast: Lorraine de Selle (Laura Schwarz), John Aldritch (Rupert Berner), Ugo Bologna (Inspector), Louisa Lloyd, John Stacy (Zookeeper), Enzo Pezzu, Monica Nickel, Stefania Pinna, Federico Velocchia.

It's good to see that Franco Prosperi's crusading moral spirit has survived the twenty years between his infamous **MONDO CANE** and 1983's hysterical **WILD BEASTS**. It's a film chock-full of the sincerity and compassion which made, say, **AFRICA ADDIO** such a salutary viewing experience. Prosperi's *deep* love of nature, and his fiery indignation at Man's wanton will to destruction have, over the years, demanded expression in some provocative and controversial ways. This time, he's been compelled to make his point about Man's contempt for Mother Nature by setting fire to live rats and then filming them running around in flames. Such integrity. 'I wonder... who are the *real* Wild Beasts?', one imagines Ruggero Deodato musing, before rushing off to film 'Rodent Holocaust'...

Taken with the obvious pinch of salt, Prosperi's **WILD BEASTS** is a tasteless but enormously entertaining film which brandishes its implausible ecological concerns in a fashion reminiscent of Umberto Lenzi's **NIGHTMARE CITY**. Lurching from one hilarious animal attack to another, the plot describes the attempts of zoo-keeper Rupert (Aldrich) and his lover Laura (de Selle) to find out why the whole animal population of the zoo has gone crazy and escaped to cause mayhem in the city streets. The plot of **WILD BEASTS** plays second fiddle to a succession of violent, somewhat surreal encounters between crazed animals and unfortunate city-dwellers. Haven't you ever wanted to see an elephant crush a human head with one enormous foot; or reach inside a car window and strangle someone to death with its trunk? Although structurally banal, Prosperi's cheesy little effort benefits greatly from the incongruity of such images. Elsewhere, for instance, a magnificent tiger invades a crowded subway train and mauls a couple of commuters; a polar bear terrorises a classful of schoolchildren, and a cheetah chases a woman driving a convertible through a city centre. There's even the Italian horror trademark scene of a blind composer being savaged to death by his alsation guide-dog. (Could this be the famous 'Dicky', the alsation in Fulci's **THE BEYOND**, made just a couple of years before? What a career!). Considering that the composer in question was working on a *musique-concret* epic called "Nature Weeps" at the time, it's hard to fault the dog in this scene...

The explanation for all this mayhem is as bizarre as one could wish - a chemicals manufacturer has accidentally contaminated the city's water supply with industrial

waste containing PCP, the powerful hallucinogenic commonly known as 'Angel Dust.' Rather insultingly, the only humans affected are the aforementioned schoolchildren, suggesting that Prosperi thinks his audience will only respond sympathetically when children and animals are involved. Full marks from this reviewer go to young Tommy, who murders his drabby schoolteacher during a hallucination rampage, presenting a much more likeable figure than Laura's daughter Suzy, a loudmouthed, irritating little brat and the only member of the class who doesn't drink the contaminated water. Earlier scenes featuring Suzy suggest that Prosperi views the breakdown in communications between parents and children as one of the key evils leading to drug abuse and lawlessness in modern society. At one point, it takes Laura quite a while to recognise that the ansaphone message she's listening to is actually her daughter pretending to be a disinterested and passionless recording. Makes you think, doesn't it?

WILD BEASTS would be even more entertaining had it been set principally in the daytime, although securing empty streets would no doubt have been difficult. (The film doesn't specify where the action is taking place, cautiously referring to 'a major European city' - possibly Frankfurt from the look of things - in the opening titles.) As it is, some of the lurid impact of the images is lost in occasionally indifferent night-time photography. And for those who view the killing of any animal as unforgivable in a movie, the treatment of rats I mentioned earlier could easily sour the fun. Still, bad taste aside, there's much to enjoy, and for anyone who was disappointed to learn that elephants rarely kill people, **WILD BEASTS** is a riot.

Stephen Thrower

THE WITCH'S CURSE

aka **MACISTE ALL'INFERNO/MACISTE IN HELL**
Italy, 1962

director: **Riccardo Freda**

screenplay: **Oreste Biancoli, Piero Pierotti, Ennio de Concini, Eddy H. Given (Ermanno Donati)**

director of photography: **Riccardo Pallotini**

editor: **Ornella Micheli**

music: **Carlo Franci**

producers: **Luigi Carpentieri, Ermanno Donati**

cast: **Kirk Morris** (Maciste), **Hélène Chanel** (Martha Gunt), **Vira Silenti** (Fania), **Andrea Bosic** (Judge Parrish), **Angelo Zanolli** (Charley Law), **John Karlsen** (Burgomeister), **Charles Fawcett** (Doctor), **John Francis Lane** (Servant), **Remo De Angelis** (Prometheus), **Gina Mascetti**.

Maciste, the perennial beefcake superhero, made his screen debut in Giovanni Pastrone's **CABIRIA** (1913), one of Italy's earliest contributions to the spectacle genre, an epic of the Second Punic Wars written by soldier-poet-neo-fascist Gabriele D'Annunzio, who mixed historical characters like Scipio, Archimedes and Sophonisba with his own inventions. Played in his first outing and over fifteen follow-ups by ex-docker Bartolomeo Pagano, Maciste was a muscle-bound slave, obviously a rip-off of the characterisation of Ursus in the even earlier epic **QUO VADIS** (1912), and spun off into his own series of muscle-straining epics, including Guido Brignone's **MACISTE ALL'INFERNO**. This 1962 outing takes its title, but little in the way of plot, from the silent film, and is actually part of the second cycle of Maciste movies, which was also commenced in imitation of another hero, as part of the flood of peplum movies that poured out of Italy after the international success of Pietro Francisci's **HERCULES** (1957).

It was not unusual for the peplum - the name is derived from a short classical tunic much worn by extras in ancient Rome movies - to cross over into the horror genre, as witness the almost mandatory guest appearances of Gods and monsters, from the Minotaur of **HERCULES** to the shape-changing Proteus of Vittorio Cottafavi's **HERCULES CONQUERS ATLANTIS** (1961). More committed to horror are Mario Bava's **HERCULES IN THE HAUNTED WORLD** (1961), with beefy Brit Reg Park facing up to Christopher Lee in Hell, Sergio Corbucci's **GOLIATH AND THE VAMPIRES** (1961), with Gordon Scott after the vampire legions of wicked queen Gianna Maria Canale (reprising her villainy from Freda's **I VAMPIRI**), Antonio Margheriti's **HERCULES, PRISONER OF EVIL** (1964), with Park against a pack of Czarist werewolves, and Giuseppe Vari's **WAR OF THE ZOMBIES** (1963), with John Drew Barrymore as a wizard raising a legion of the undead. Freda's **THE WITCH'S CURSE** is the most schizoid of these films, opting not to import some horror movie trappings into the nebulous classical-mythical-ancient world setting of the usual peplum but instead to bring its hero (Morris) into the mock-gothic world of the early sixties horror film.

Indeed, the film opens like an imitation of Bava's **THE MASK OF SATAN**, with a witch called Martha Gunt (Chanel) being burned in 1553 on the orders of her ex-lover, the local magistrate (Bosic). Set in the 17th century Scots village of 'Loch Lake' - a name obviously coined by a screenwriter who didn't realise it was a tautology in Scots English - the witch-burning stuff features the traditional curse recited as the flames rise up, and then segues to the usual one-hundred-years-later business whereby the whole region is infected with evil and injustice, and a newly married secondary heroine (Silenti) descended from the witch is being framed for sorcery by the ghosts of Martha Gunt and the damned Judge. This segment of the film is nicely composed in scope, with period extras dashing around in Puritan costumes, and plenty of shots of the ominous, burned-out stump of the tree where Martha was put to death. There is even a Bava-ish touch when the innocent girl's 'guilt' is confirmed by the sudden bursting into flames of the bible she is called to swear upon at her trial.

However, things get more bizarre but less interesting when the local doctor decides to call in a hero to sort the situation out, and Maciste just happens to ride by complete with sandals, loincloth and body-oil - seemingly unaffected by the Northern cold - and decides that the only way to save the girl is to go to Hell and persuade Martha to lift the curse. The blasted tree tips back to reveal fiery caverns, and Maciste descends into an especially cheapskate Inferno which consists of well-lit caverns, showers of polystyrene packaging, several stuffed snakes and dozy lions, lots of bouncing rocks and rather too many fire effects. "*I've always fought for good, and won,*" Maciste claims, when asked to explain his motivation, but this exploit - although it might sound pretty daring on paper - turns out to be distinctly ho-hum as trips to Hell go. Goliath and Prometheus get guest appearances, the former to allow for some muscle-straining wrestling, and the latter to do a bit of footage-wasting by persuading a temporarily amnesiac Maciste to look into a pool of memory and take in the highlights of Carlo Campogalliani's **MACISTE THE MIGHTY** (1960), Antonio Leonviola's **ATLAS AGAINST THE CYCLOPS** (1961) and Freda's own **SAMSON AND THE SEVEN MIRACLES OF THE WORLD** (1961) to remind him of the kind of hero he is. Unfortunately, these also serve to remind the audience how small-scale and underpopulated the current movie is, by contrast with the pyramid building and chariot-driving exploits excerpted in these flashbacks, which feature hordes

of extras and huge outdoor sets. Most of the feats of strength on view in **THE WITCH'S CURSE** involve the hero very slowly lifting up large but obviously not very heavy bits of rock. Here, the body worship inherent in the peplum comes to the fore with close-ups of rippling muscle, but it's also difficult to escape from the realisation that the hardest, thickest muscle on view is the one inside the hero's head. When Maciste remembers who he is - something it's possible a newcomer to the series would find very difficult on the information given in the script - he has trouble because he has fallen for a pretty damned soul called Flavia whom it would be impossible for anyone not as stupid as Maciste to avoid recognising as Martha Gunt without the pantomime warts-and-gray-skin make-up. Fortunately, all this rock-lifting and pectoral flexing has impressed the girlish sorceress and she decides to lift the curse, turning to ashes in mid-kiss. Maciste gets back to Scotland where he is just in time to stop the villagers from burning the witch's descendant and to see the troublesome tree destroyed. His job done, the girl reunited with her fiancée, our hero rides out for adventures elsewhere.

In a piece written for the National Film Theatre screening of the film, Richard Dyer quite pointedly explains Maciste's time-tripping with the suggestion that *"Maciste's freedom of movement... is also the logical extension of a central fact about all peplum heroes, namely, that they are Americans. It is almost a definition of the peplum that the hero be played by an American, and if no American proved available, unknown Italian muscle boys could be given US-sounding names for the occasion (the fact that Reg Park is British could be overlooked). This cult of the American super-male as the world's righter of wrong no doubt has links with the popularity of Superman and other comics, but also perhaps to the fact that Fascism had rather discredited the imagery of muscle-bound Italians (or, of course, Germans). Kirk Morris' Americanness is evident in his fabulous fifties hairdo, bespeaking a Dean-Prezley image atop a High School gym body. He doesn't do much, but his pretty boy looks carry him through the outlandishness of the plot."* The problem with **THE WITCH'S CURSE** doesn't lie in the wooden posing of its hero or in its demented plotting, but - oddly and disappointingly - in the lack of directorial enthusiasm. Freda had done some enjoyably spectacular tricks in his earlier pepla, and this comes from the same period as the very best of his horror movies, **THE TERROR OF DR. HICHCOCK** (1962) and **THE GHOST** (1963). But, aside from some special effects so simple that Meliès could have managed them as

well, this is a film sorely lacking in magic. Prometheus swats the tatty eagle chewing at his liver with a weariness born not of eternal torment but of acute self-consciousness about the silliness of the scene. Despite the race-against-time plot, the film seems to dawdle through its 78 minutes (NB: despite the reference books, that does seem to be the complete version - it is certainly how long the French print the NFT screened ran) with a slowness that gets perilously near to loitering. Compared to Bava's **HERCULES IN THE HAUNTED WORLD**, this voyage to the underworld is a lifeless bore, free from visual or narrative quirks. Thrown together in eight days, it really does justify Paul Willeman's comment in The Aurum Horror Encyclopedia that *"this cheapie appears to have been made with so little thought that it borders on dishonesty."* Still, Maciste's first appearance is breathtaking in its straightforward and bare-faced presentation of the utterly ludicrous as a fact of screen life.

Kim Newman

WOMEN'S CAMP 119

aka **KZ9 - LAGER DI STERMINIO / S.S. EXTERMINATION LOVE CAMP**
Italy, 1976

director: **Bruno Mattei**

screenplay: **Bruno Mattei, Aureliano Luppi, Giacinto Bonacquisti**

director of photography: **Luigi Ciccarese**

editor: **Vincenzo Vanni**

music: **Alessandro Alessandroni**

producers: **Marcello Berni, Tommy Polgár**

cast: **Ivano Staccioli, Lorraine de Salle, Nello Riviè, Gabriele Carrara, Giovanni Attanasio, Sonia Viviani, Marina D'Aunia, Monica Nikel, Titti Benvenuto, Ria De Simone.**

Nazi exploitation films are like cockroaches - just when you think you've got rid of the last one, another scuttles into view. Bruno Mattei, director of the pathetic **ZOMBIE CREEPING FLESH**, isn't a man to miss out on a rip-off, so it comes as no great surprise to find that he too has excreted a contribution to the Nazi cycle. What is perhaps surprising is that **WOMEN'S CAMP 119** is not a lifeless piece of dung.

One might have expected such, from the man who turned the promise of Lucio Fulci's **ZOMBI 3** into a steaming plate of ordure, described in *Shock Xpress* by Lucas Balbo as "useless", but this scummy effort is actually quite gripping. All the staple ingredients of the cycle are in evidence; maniacal 'Dick Dastardly' Nazi officers, sadistic lesbian warders, assorted mutilation and torture agonised over by a couple of unwilling doctors plagued with guilt at their involvement...

The main reason for watching these films is the admittedly cynical pleasure of gawping at their outrageous violence whilst laughing at their sheer bad taste and ineptitude. From such a point of view, Mattei's effort is pretty good. The gruesome scenes are really quite disgusting, whilst actors resembling the cast of *On The Buses* spit out lines like "*Lick my boots forever, dog!*" An early scene depicts a room full of women being gassed by Zyklon-B nerve gas, and achieves a revolting intensity by showing the dead bodies streaked with excrement (Zyklon-B victims would defecate uncontrollably as they expired). Elsewhere, uterus transplants, hideously smashed limbs deliberately left to heal without treatment or anaesthetic, and plentiful flagellation are interspersed with extensive nudity to a frequently disturbing extent. An atmosphere of madness and decay develops which Mattei may genuinely have striven for, rather than it being merely accidental, but this doesn't stop some scenes descending into absurdity. One blackly hilarious moment has the two doctors, a man and a woman, flicking through repellent colour photographs of skin diseases in a medical book, while exchanging over-acted 'significant' glances - their expressions are madly inappropriate, in keeping, one could say, with the entire film. Then there's the fate of two homosexual male prisoners, happily knitting in their cell, who are forced to undergo 'treatment' for their 'condition', which involves three desperately ugly women pouting and posing their way into the horrified queens' beds, where they squirm around in a miserable attempt at coitus. Again, this is all more reminiscent of '70s TV comedy (John Inman would not have been out of place here) than death camp horror.

But these are isolated sequences - in general, **WOMEN'S CAMP 119** is a sleazy, misanthropic piece of filth, nowhere more so than in the scene where the Kommandant in charge of Camp 119 watches real newsreel footage of the actual death camps, images we're all familiar with from such programmes as *The World at War*. It might be

splitting hairs when dealing with such a morally bankrupt sub-genre, but for my money this inclusion is altogether the sickest tactic employed in the so-called Nazi cycle. Whatever the complications caused by such a move, however, I have to say I found **WOMEN'S CAMP 119** surprisingly watchable for a Bruno Mattei film and one of the 'better' additions to the lower-than-a-snail's-arse death camp cycle.

Stephen Thrower

WRONY
aka **CROWS**
Poland, 1994

writer/director: **Dorota Kedzierzawska**
director of photography: **Arthur Reinhart**
editors: **Dorota Kedzierzawska, Arthur Reinhart**
music: **Wlodek Pawlik**
producers: **Tadeusz Chmielewski, Carmen Szwec, Jan Wiodarczyk**

cast: **Karolina Ostrozna** (The Crow), **Kasia Szczepanik** (The Baby), **Malgorzata Hajewska** (The Crow's Mother), **Anna Prucnal** (The Teacher), **Ewa Bukowska** (Mother), **Krzysztof Grabarczyk** (Father).

WRONY is only the second full length film from Dorota Kedzierzawska, whose previous credits include such shorts as **AGNIESZKA** (1980), **JAJKO** ('The Egg') (1982), **POCZATEK** ('The Beginning') (1983), **GUCIA** (1985), and **KONIEK SWIATA** ('The End of the World') (1988) which won four awards at the 1989 Mannheim Festival. **DIABLY**, **DIABLY** ('Devils, Devils') (1991), her feature film debut, played at the London Film Festival of that year, and garnered critical acclaim at Cannes. **WRONY**, shown twice at the 1994 London Film Festival to small but rapt audiences, is certain to gain Kedzierzawska more admirers; it is that rarity, a perfect, polished gem of a film, one that reaches into the very soul of the viewer, touching and inspiring by its simple but pointed message, that (to quote the director) "Love bears love".

A wistful waif, ten year old Wrona (Crow) (played with extraordinary conviction by first time actress Karolina Ostrozna, herself only nine when the film was shot) is



starved of affection at home (she has no father, and her mother is constantly out at work) and unpopular at school, where she is bullied, and humiliated by uncaring teachers. When she is forced to strip down to her knickers and vest for a PE lesson in front of her sniggering classmates she snaps and swears at the teacher; for this she is sent home, but instead she spends her time wandering the streets, accosting and flirting with passers-by and avoiding the unwanted sexual advances of a bunch of lecherous boys who attempt to bribe her into dropping her knickers. Passing by a house, Wrona's gaze is drawn by a tiny blonde girl (three year old Kasia Szczepanik), who attracts her attention and stirs her insatiable desire to give love, and be loved. Her mother being absent yet again, Wrona wanders down to the beach, but her innocent games are interrupted by the sudden and frightening intrusion of a man who runs after the screaming child, sending her sobbing back to her dark and deserted apartment, where she cowers in fear of whatever terrors may lurk outside, with no-one to hold her and comfort her.

The next day Wrona kidnaps the little girl she saw the previous day, telling the puzzled but trusting toddler that she is her "new mother" and that they are going to the end of the world. The rest of **WRONY** revolves around the exploits of the two children as Wrona vainly strives to recreate a facsimile happy family, pouring out her stifled love

(and hidden rage) on her "baby" whilst avoiding those whom she feels will take back the little girl and punish her. It is a brief but poignant odyssey that the two children embark on, and their adventure is lovingly depicted by the telling camera-work of German born Arthur Reinhart, who has an eye for composition, catching the lively characters of Wrona and her diminutive companion, as well as the stark, decaying beauty of the Polish town they flee, the sunlit beaches they play on, and the rain lashed nightscapes that they aimlessly traverse. Of course Wrona finds her dream souring, little Baby being unable to conform to her ideals, and turns her pent-up anger on the unfortunate infant in scenes of abrupt violence that genuinely shock. Realising that her fantasy is just that, Wrona returns the sleeping Baby to her parents, and slopes off home, to find her mother has hardly missed her; **WRONY** ends on a despairing note, with Wrona vainly, desperately, begging her mother "Hold me"...

WRONY never outstays its welcome, being a bare 66 minutes long, and the story is perfectly balanced, powerfully directed, and the more intense elements of the plot are lightened by moments of visual poetry, as in the scenes of the two children playing in a bath-tub, and wicked humour (the Baby peeing her pants during a solemn wedding ceremony that they have gatecrashed). The soundtrack by Wlodek Pawlik mixes child-like voices, piano and saxophone, and is an ideal accompaniment to the often enchanting visuals. Certain images stick in one's mind; Wrona, back turned to the audience, casting a challenging look into the camera's candid eye as she doffs her night-dress (the nudity in **WRONY** is brief and non-exploitative), the close-ups of her tear-filled eyes as she realises the hopelessness of her situation, and her explosion of rage at Baby's thoughtless vandalism of a treasured toy, as she topples the wailing toddler into the sea from a "borrowed" fishing boat with a well aimed cuff. Both children give astonishingly assured and engaging performances, projecting their personalities beyond the screen. We really care about them, and their journey becomes ours. What sentimentality there is (as in the lovely little scene where Baby sleepily sings the Nursery lullaby 'All the Little Horses') is consistently undercut by the darker threads in the plot - kidnapping, emotional neglect and the casual violence of childhood; cute these little girls may well be, but this is definitely not a Walt Disney film... "*The Crow* loves and wants to be loved..." explains the director, going on to say "*If the world rejects her, her love, her eagerness to love, may eventu-*

ally die. *Nothing worse can happen to a human being*". And this of course is the moral at the heart of **WRONY**; "Each one of us is a 'crow'".

Dorota Kedzierzawska was present at the London Film Festival screenings, and was evidently pleased that the film went down well. In the question and answer session that followed she was able to fill in some background details about the two children, which threw a bit of light on their on-screen characters. Neither child had done any previous acting, and there had been a degree of on-set tension between Karolina Ostrozna, who came from a poor family background and was bullied at school for real, and little Kasia Szczepanik who hailed from a rather more well off family. The older girl took to kicking and pinching the younger one when she thought no-one was looking; so much for 'Sugar and spice and all things nice'! On a happier note it turns out that after she made the film Ostrozna had gone up in the estimation of her peers at school and the bullying had eased a little. There's no doubt that it is Ostrozna's feisty performance that really makes **WRONY** work; she's a likeable kid and this is a likeable film. It should come as little surprise that, at the time of writing, no British distributor has seen fit to pick up **WRONY** for a UK release. However, if there is any chance of getting to see this micro-masterpiece of a film, then do so. You won't be disappointed.

Nigel Burrell

ZEDER

aka **ZEDER (VOICES FROM THE BEYOND) / REVENGE OF THE DEAD**
Italy 1983

director: **Pupi Avati**

screenplay: **Pupi Avati, Maurizio Costanzo, Antonio Avati**

director of photography: **Franco delli Colli**

editor: **Amedeo Salfa**

music: **Riz Ortolani**

producers: **Gianni Minervini, Antonio Avati**

cast: **Gabriele Lavia** (Stefano), **Anne Canovas** (Alessandra), **Paola Tanziani** (Gabriella Goodman), **Cesare Barbetti** (Dr Meyer), **John Stacy** (Professor Chesi), **Enea Ferrario** (Hotel owner), **Marcello Tusco** (Dr Melis), **Ferdinando Orlandi** (Giovine), **Bob Tonelli** (Mr Big), **Aldo Sassi** (Luigi Costa).

Chartres, France, 1956: Using a young girl, Gabriella, as a medium, Dr Meyer (Barbetti) is investigating a violent haunting at an isolated old house. In the cellar he discovers the remains of a 19th century scholar named Paolo Zeder, "someone who just disappeared into thin air". Zeder had been researching into what he called "K-Zones" - areas which apparently exist out of time, and where it is possible for the dead to return from the hereafter. Meyer realises that he has stumbled across just such a place...

Bologna, Italy. The present: Stefano (Lavia), an unsuccessful novelist, is given a second-hand typewriter by his wife Alessandra (Canovas). From the used ribbon, he manages to decipher some curious phrases that initially intrigue, then disturb him. At the university he shows his findings to Professor Chesi (Stacy) who explains about Zeder and his bizarre theories. With the help of a police-officer friend, Stefano finds out that the typewriter belonged to a de-frocked priest named Luigi Costa (Sassi) who died of lung cancer a few months earlier. It turns out that Italy has a "K-Zone" located at a disused holiday camp in the coastal town of Spina. Here, in the utmost secrecy, a team of scientists led by Dr Meyer and Gabriella (Tanziani) are trying to resurrect Costa. Having made this discovery, Stefano and his wife find their lives threatened by this sinister organisation, which also involves their friends Professor Chesi and Dr Melis (Tusco). After a succession of inexplicable disappearances and gruesome deaths, the couple finally witness the terrifying re-awakening of the malignant priest, who brutally kills those responsible for his return from the dead. Alessandra also becomes a victim of the tragic experiment. Stefano buries her body in the grounds of the camp and sits down to wait...

This beautifully stylish TV movie marks Avati's welcome (though sadly brief) return to the horror genre. Understandably, his approach to the living dead has more in common with Val Lewton's early forties mood pieces than with Fulci's grisly epics, but as in **THE HOUSE WITH THE WINDOWS THAT LAUGH** he does include a particularly graphic stabbing. The screenplay, which includes contributions from the excellent TV presenter Costanzo, once again testifies to Avati's exemplary storytelling skill. The emphasis is firmly on the dialogue, but thanks to some remarkably well-chosen imagery, he manages to infuse the film with a mounting sense of panic. One of the surreal highlights of the more leisurely paced **HOUSE WITH THE WINDOWS THAT LAUGH** was an interior shot of an old fridge infested

with snails. In **ZEDER**, Avati achieves a superbly nightmarish effect with a coffin full of frantically flapping birds. He also extends his pre-occupation with the more sinister aspects of religion, even to the extent of having the clergy describe themselves as "*professionals of the supernatural*"! It is interesting to note, however, that the church cannot offer solutions to Avati's heroes, and especially in the case of **HOUSE**, functions merely as a cover for degeneration. The soul is an important concept in the Catholic faith and **ZEDER** documents the return of the *souls* of the dead through the alchemical properties of the K-Zones. But the spirits of the dead can only return to destroy the flesh of the living, as Stefano discovers to his cost when he embraces his resurrected wife at the end of the picture. Mixing this morbid theme with cold, scientific fact, Avati creates a strikingly oppressive atmosphere of suspense.

From a purely visual point of view, the film benefits from an intelligent use of the expected Emilia-Romagna locations. The Bolognese Avati's love of his native region is well-known, and here he manages to include some fascinating local landmarks like the Etruscan necropolis at Spina into the story. The huge skeletal wreck of the abandoned holiday camp is especially impressive, with delli Colli's handsome camerawork making the most of its shadowy recesses and bizarre design. Avati is also well served by his favourite composer Riz Ortolani. Here he reprises some of the themes from his brilliant score for Deodato's infamous **CANNIBAL HOLOCAUST**, and complements delli Colli's depiction of the flat landscape with bleak synthesizer tones. Ortolani has won several awards for his work with Avati, and his best score for the director is from **A SCHOOL OUTING**, a classy comedy set in the Bologna of 1914.

Although **ZEDER** is studded with accomplished performances from Avati regulars like Orlandi, Tonelli and Barbetti, it's one weak link is its star, Gabriele Lavia. Considering that in **BORDELLA** and **CHRISTMAS PRESENT** Avati had even coaxed good performances from Joe D'Amato regular George Eastman, it seems odd that he cannot do much with someone like Lavia, who has had extensive theatrical experience. However, it will be apparent to anyone who has suffered through Lavia's three self-directed features, in which he and his wife, the equally egocentric Monica Guerritore, rant and pose like there's no tomorrow, that his furrow-browed narcissism is perhaps too overpowering. Significantly, Lavia's best work is for directors like Argento and Damiani - he'd probably met his match!



Since **ZEDER**, Avati has not gone back to the macabre. He has been quoted as saying he's afraid to do an all-out horror project, and his recent work is as far removed from the genre as one could get. He has made several comedies like **FESTA DI LAUREA** and the anthology film **MARRIAGES**, as well as the football drama **LAST MINUTE**. His latest project, **THE STORY OF BOYS AND GIRLS** is a black and white film about the marriage of an upper-class boy to a lower-class girl in the 1930s. We can only hope that he will eventually summon up the courage to return to horror, and do something to raise the standards of Italy's rapidly declining output.

Mark Ashworth





Adjani and the Magician: Zulawski coaches his star for another grueling scene in POSSESSION

Two essays on Zulawski's POSSESSION

by Daniel Bird and Stephen Thrower

POSSESSION (France/West Germany, 1981)

writer/director: **Andrzej Zulawski** director of photography: **Bruno Nuytens**
 editors: **Marie-Sophie Dubus, Suzanne Lang-Willar** music: **Andrzej Korzynski** producer: **Marie-Laure Reyre**

cast: **Isabelle Adjani** (Anna/Helen), **Sam Neill** (Marc), **Heinz Bennent** (Heinrich), **Margit Carstensen** (Margit Gluckmeister), **Johanna Hofer** (Heinrich's mother), **Carl Duering** (Detective), **Shaun Lawton** (Zimmermann), **Michael Hogben** (Bob), **Maximilian Rühllein** (Man with pink socks), **Gerd Neubert** (Subway drunk).

Zulawski's **POSSESSION** by Daniel Bird

In a typically hyperbolic response to a probing French journalist in *L'Avant Scene Cinema*, Isabelle Adjani described **POSSESSION** as a work of emotional pornography and its originator, Andrzej Zulawski, a magician. Adjani's remarks should not be dismissed purely as throwaway comments, for they seem to begin the daunting task of approaching **POSSESSION** (and for that matter, Zulawski) in a credible manner.

Critical response towards **POSSESSION** seems to centre upon the two most prominent properties of the director's signature: excess and symbolism. The violence and hysteria that runs continuously deeper through **DIABEL**, **L'IMPORTANT C'EST D'AIMER** and **NA SREBNYM GLOBIE** seems to reach a bloody climax in **POSSESSION**, excessive even by Zulawski's standards. The symbolism in **DIABEL** and **NA SREBNYM GLOBIE** at first seems unnecessarily obscure in **POSSESSION**:

"Clearly the director meant all this to be symbolic, but fails to connect his symbols with anything concrete. And without a context it doesn't seem to mean anything. POSSESSION is a film without a purpose. As much as it strains to say both something and everything, it instead remains obscure and ambiguous."
 (Dennis Fischer in *Cinefantastique*, 14/5/81)

POSSESSION is obscure and ambiguous only because it has an allusiveness which the West can scarcely expect from symbolic thinking. It marks a transitional period in

Zulawski's career, both thematically and geographically (it was his second film to be shot outside Poland, before he relocated in Paris until the shooting of **SZAMANKA** in 1996). The fact that **POSSESSION** is a Franco-German co-production set in Berlin only reinforces Zulawski as a Polish film maker. His work supports Raymond Durnat's description of the Polish culture as one whose feudalism, abrupt socialism and oppression, had generated a dialectic between romanticism and cynicism, materialism and moral concern. This dialectic had "created a second home for existentialism, a home less impaired by Hamletian splits between ego and politics, intellect and emotion, reflection and action." The converse of existentialism, the art of the absurd, seems to have found its cinematic form during the seventies, in filmmakers as diverse as Jan Lenica (literally, with his adaptations of Jarry), Walerian Borowczyk, Roman Polanski (the influence of Beckett) and Andrzej Zulawski. Their films are marked by an intense physicality (Borowczyk's actors tend to exhaustively negotiate sets; Zulawski, on the other hand, requires no elaboration), being less liberal and, as Fischer illustrates, more philosophical.

By the time **POSSESSION** was made, nearly a decade had elapsed since Durnat discussed this dialectic, and Berlin (whether or not Zulawski intended to shoot there for financial reasons), perfectly illustrates the cracks encroaching from the West between the intellect and emotion. It is often ignored that Berlin is almost upon the Polish border, a reminder of the fact that it is part of an ignored middle Europe. A divided Berlin literally torn between the intellect and emotion. Zulawski has discussed their respective colour

codes, blue and yellow. In **POSSESSION**, blue is the dominant colour.

Clearly, **POSSESSION** poses as many difficulties to the viewer as Bergman's **PERSONA**. What happens to Anna in the subway; and when? Is it part of her imagination? However, more often than not critics have dismissed their confusion and have merely accused Zulawski of being self-indulgent.

Susan Sontag's essay on **PERSONA** begins by discussing why it should not be treated as a subjective or an objective film. Her argument is equally valid when discussing **POSSESSION**. Sontag says that merely situating the action of a film in a mental space only ignores the difficulties the film presents. The difficulty **POSSESSION** poses for the viewer is when elements of the film which at first appear impossible (the existence of a slimy tentacled monster) relate directly to real events in the narrative. An example of which is when Heinrich faces the creature and asks Anna: "Is this a joke?"

Anna's subway miscarriage illustrates another problem: that causal connections made by the viewer during the first part of the film are not consistent with the subsequent parts; resulting in several equally persuasive but mutually exclusive explanations of the same event:

"Perhaps one should consider the film's birth scene, in which Anna gives birth to a foetus in the metro. Theories on the meaning and significance of the scene vary widely. Anna later refers to the foetus as something she has miscarried. Taken literally, this suggests that the baby was the offspring of the monster, but many have suggested that the baby in fact is the monster, and we have witnessed its birth out of context (we had already seen it in Anna's flat in earlier scenes).

(Chris Gallant in *The Goblin* #7)

Sontag concludes her argument stating that such discordant internal events only get transposed, intact, and not reconciled, when the whole film is relocated in the mind. **POSSESSION**, like **PERSONA**, should not be approached in search of an objective narrative. Gallant acknowledges the fact that **POSSESSION** is full of signs and events which cancel each other out. For example, In order to give birth to the creature, Anna must first be impregnated by it, and to be impregnated, she must have already given birth to it. Even the most skilful attempt to arrange a single, plausible synopsis must leave out, or alternatively contradict, some of the

key sections. As was the problem when approaching the narrative in a subjective manner, the most problematic section when objectively approaching **POSSESSION** concerns determining the significance and context of the miscarriage scene. Less skilful attempts of making an objective account of **POSSESSION** have simply excluded the miscarriage scene for the sake of a coherent synopsis. Alternatively, it has been represented inaccurately:

"The plot...concerns a husband [Neill] who returns to his wife after a long absence and finds her acting strangely. He suspects that she has a lover, and finds this later to be true. Heinz Bennent plays the lover, who lives with his mother. When Neill confronts him, Bennent tries to seduce him and then karates Neill when he gets hostile to his advances.

Eventually even Neill starts to act funny. At one point, he takes an electric knife and cuts his arm for no apparent reason. Meanwhile Adjani inexplicably gives birth to an alien being in a subway station.

Adjani decides to leave both her husband and lover to devote herself to her new creation. Neill dispatches detectives, who are quickly dispatched by Adjani. Then, Neill has Bennent killed. The film ends with the assassination of Neill and Adjani, and the escape of the alien. (Dennis Fischer)

So how is **POSSESSION** to be approached? For a start it's worth noting that **POSSESSION** is less complex than **PERSONA** yet more abstract.

Compared to the attention paid towards language, film has certainly not been taken seriously by philosophers. Consequently, it has been dealt with by other schools, Marxism, psychoanalysis and semiotics. Karl Popper's criticism, of such theories being circular, therefore largely impossible to falsify, has simply been ignored. Fischer's review of **POSSESSION** illustrates an important issue with regards film interpretation which needs to be addressed: the role of the interpreter. Sontag distinguishes the broadest sense of interpretation, one in which Nietzsche says "There are no facts, only interpretations", from specifically interpreting the meaning of, for example, a film via certain 'rules' and the acknowledgement of certain codes. To be more specific, interpreting the intentions of the implied author. This approach fails to evaluate the considerable virtue of abstract work. Zulawski, through a mixture of almost sarcastic naiveté and downright stubbornness, has pursued a cinematic career producing indigestible work which has

consistently annoyed, infuriated and occasionally humiliated film critics.

"I am ready to understand whatever there is but it doesn't seem to make much sense." (Marc)

Abstract films like **PERSONA**, Resnais's **LAST YEAR AT MARIENBAD**, Roeg and Cammell's **PERFORMANCE** or Lynch's **LOST HIGHWAY** make extremely awkward fits into the schema of such doctrines as psychoanalysis or semiotics. They have endured stilted interpretation, founded on usually weak evidence, such as Bergman's admission of having read Jung whilst writing **PERSONA** - never trust the teller, trust the tale said Lawrence (Sontag). But what distinguishes **POSSESSION** from other abstract films is the sublime nature of the transition from a causal narrative to a more elliptical work. Unlike **PERFORMANCE**, or for that matter **LOST HIGHWAY**, the transition made during **POSSESSION** is not announced. The degree of abstraction proceeds from the realistic material of Neill's flat, sharing an anti-romantic, cool, mundane, clinical bourgeois-modern look with **PERSONA**; to the absurd evocative, grotesque surround of Anna's flat, the lair of the monster; by swinging with increasing momentum from scenes composed of the realistic material of the former, and absurd material of the latter the film achieves a surreal, hallucinatory quality.

Gregory Currie began the assault in *Image and the Mind* by establishing that psychoanalytic and semiotic doctrines depend crucially on the commonality between pictures and language. **POSSESSION** simply doesn't fit into either scheme at all. It's indigestible. Can Zulawski's camera, swirling around a distraught Marc, be accurately described as a clause of speech (e.g. Metz)?

But rather than rejecting such an overtly linguistic theory of film outright, psychoanalysis is resurrected to prove that psychoanalytic methods are themselves language-like, most prominently in the writings of Jacques Lacan, with his claim that the unconscious is structured like language. Lacanian based film theories are contrived to put it mildly, though comparisons with Ptolemaic astronomers may be slightly hyperbolic.

The weakest methods of film interpretation have been the employment of vague analogies: cinema and Plato's cave, cinema as dreaming and (my favourite) the screen and the breast. That is not to say analogies are not useful. But it

has to be remembered that analogies are just that: analogies (Currie). The metaphorical and the real should remain distinct, unlike the employment of Lacan's mirror stage, as well as the relationship between film and the viewer.

Interpreting abstract material such as **POSSESSION**, using aggressive ideological, anti-philosophical systems of thought constructed to derive meaning, translates the material into something else. In the case of **POSSESSION**, removing manifest content in the hope of discovering a residue of latent content ('true meaning') yields an unrecognisable pretentious mess. The virtue of **POSSESSION** is that it cannot be reduced to something manageable or comfortable, it cannot be tamed or categorised - Sontag's criteria for an artwork possessing the ability to make us nervous.

Crucially, psychoanalytic and semiotic doctrines take for granted the nature of film, the sensory experience. Sontag concludes *Against Interpretation* with the statement that we should regain our senses: we must learn to hear more, to feel more. And this is how we should start to approach **POSSESSION**.

For Zulawski, cinema doesn't represent reality. Film is not the product of any cognitive illusion to the effect that what is represented is real. The viewer imagines Anna miscarrying after a violent fit in the Berlin subway. Our standard mode of engagement with **POSSESSION** is via imagination rather than belief. However our imagining of Anna's violent fit is parasitic upon the viewer believing she is having a fit, for it consists of running our belief systems off-line, disconnected from standard inputs and outputs (Currie). We see on the screen what the camera sees: Anna's existence in **POSSESSION** is as Adjani's fictional character, it is *Adjani* having a fit in front of the camera, climaxing by physically vomiting. Upon the evidence of the cut negative of the film, there is nothing to distinguish the role of Anna from Adjani's performance: Adjani performs Anna. Adjani can be described as having walked down one of the streets of Berlin, or having thrown up in the subway - because she literally did.

For Zulawski, fiction becomes impossible and therefore false, rejecting the Platonic distinction at the root of Western philosophy between appearance and essence. The essence of film (pictures that literally move) and appearance (the consecutive projection of images of reality) are not qualitatively different things but elements of the same thing - cinema. Zulawski provides an effective challenge to

Sontag's comment on the paradoxical promise of film - that it always gives the illusion of a voyeuristic access to an untampered reality, a neutral view of things as they are. By filming his own reflection, Heinrich documents the process of seeing itself, before turning his attention to Anna.

Zulawski cannot be related to Sontag's new self-reflexive cinema, for which she cites Pasolini's remark that the presence of the camera is felt in such films, for example Vertov's **MAN WITH A MOVIE CAMERA**. Godard's **LE MEPRIS**, and Zulawski's previous film **L'IMPORTANT C'EST D'AIMER**, accommodate Pasolini's criterion perfectly; the viewer's consciousness is inserted by the felt presence of the film as object. But what distinguishes Godard, or **L'IMPORTANT C'EST D'AIMER** from **POSSESSION** - or for that matter all of Zulawski's subsequent films - is that rather than remind audiences that they are watching a film, Zulawski attacks such a distinction to the point of obscurity. What is there to distance Heinrich's cine-film from the rest of **POSSESSION**? Other than the futile "cut!" shouted by the maniacal film director in Zulawski's **LA FEMME PUBLIQUE**, what is there to separate the chaos both on and off the film within a film?

In **POSSESSION** Anna is not fictional: her reality is to be an imaginary character. The subway miscarriage sequence is the most explicit revelation of the Artaudian nature of Zulawski's work (filtered through Polish theatre theorist Grotowski), as Anna is released from a rigid body, squirming under a crucifix, smothered to the point of terminal incoherence and inexpressivity, into a laughing, wild, flexible, half-formed instrument of pure expression, a 'Madame Edwarda' of sorts:

"...she writhed, shaken by respiratory spasms...the way her body flopped like a fish, the ignorable rage expressed by the ill written on her features..." (from *Madame Edwarda* by Georges Bataille)

It's no mistake that Anna is a ballet instructor. Zulawski explodes her redundant body into a delirious, dancing new body, with an infinite capacity for self transformation and destruction (Barber). Zulawski acknowledges the complexity of representation, Adjani's 'emotional pornography' being Bataille's base materialism obscured by Hegel's blinding absolute knowledge.

Zulawski's reflexive cinema requests more fundamental attention. **POSSESSION** illustrates his reflection upon

the nature of representation (the status of the image, of the word, of action, of film itself) most prominently in the sequence where Marc watches a super-8 film of Anna, shot by Heinrich. Marc arrives at the door of his flat to find a hand-delivered parcel; inside he finds a fragile, exposed reel of cine-film. The next shot we see is of the rays of a projector across Marc's shoulder land upon a screen. The cine-film is an object, a visual and pictorial work. Marc watches the projection on the screen: his mode of representation pictorial. She is composed of individual pictures of herself bound on a perforated strip composing of consecutive pictures that literally move, rushing through the gate of the projector. Not one of the pictures can justify itself (Bresson), only when related to the adjacent pictures can it constitute meaning - Anna is represented as walking into a ballet studio. But the distinctive cinematic unit (Sontag) is not the connection between the images of Anna walking but the principle of connection between the images of Anna and the other ballet dancers: the relationship between the shot to the one that preceded it and the one that comes after.

It is not, as Bazin claims, that I (the knower) imagine myself to be witness to Anna dislocating the leg of a young ballet dancer, placed where the camera is. Narration proceeds by the change of shot. The change of shot reveals Heinrich, first filming his reflection, followed by Anna and a class of young ballet dancers. The camera 'I' continuously displaces Heinrich's 'Me'. One should not underestimate the role of disorientation in cinema. Dario Argento has based his whole oeuvre around it.

But are filmmakers such as Argento and Zulawski more interested in the re-creation of experience than in discerning the nature of the experienter? One involves the other. William James was the first to split the self into the 'I' and the 'Me'. The self as both subject and object, the 'I' as the knower and the 'Me' being the known: Anna's the mother me, the teacher me, the social me, and the spiritual me. Like Michael Powell's **PEEPING TOM**, the camera continually displaces its presence. In this case Heinrich's head is physically got out of the way, only for Anna to console the viewer: "Well that's why you are with me, for you say I for me." Splitting the presence of the 'I', camera as subject and the actress as object.

"...well I am unable to say, maybe it's impossible to say, maybe I am too stupid..." (Anna)

Anna's extreme breakdown in communication whilst presenting her monologue to Heinrich's camera illustrates Zulawski's reflection upon the status of language. Like the protagonist of the later *MES NUITS SONT PLUS BELLES QUE VOS JOURS*, she is betrayed by speech itself. Marc and Anna's dialogues are both cruel and fraudulent. They identify language to be impure, contaminated, exhausted and abstract. All that remains is a language appropriate to a narrative strung along a set of gaps in the explanation. Language in *POSSESSION* is transgressed by Anna's ear-piercing shrieks, infinitely more potent than words (like *PERSONA*'s absences of words), whilst Marc's faith in words drags him down to the same level of hysterical anguish alongside Anna. Speech both an immaterial medium (compared with say cinematic images) and a human activity with an apparently essential stake in the project of transcendence, of moving beyond the singular contingent (all words being abstractions, only roughly on or making reference to concrete particulars). (Sontag). Anna's agonised screams echo Artaud further. Artaud's descriptions of his own intellectual distress, his mind as a (slimy) physical property, his "I" abandoned by his thoughts and ideas, resonate furthermore in Anna. Zulawski's words on screen are profoundly contradictory, his imagery is materialistic and his characters' minds are stretched to philosophical delirium. Rejecting Cartesian thought leaves Anna and Marc like Artaud, in a "constant pursuit of [their] intellectual being." Anna is exhausted to the point of "stupefying confusion" based on her "language in relationship to [her] thought" (Artaud).

"Everything that can be thought at all can be thought clearly. Everything that can be said at all can be said clearly. But not everything that can be thought can be said clearly." (Wittgenstein)

Zulawski closes the gap between art and life to destructive ends. Both in form and content (he claims to have used exchanges from his own arguments with Malgorzata Braunek in *POSSESSION*'s dialogue). With regards to form, whilst our imaginings may have a distinctively visual structure, we don't imagine that the action represented is occurring in the present as we watch (Currie); we know that the above film is not concurrent with our watching because Marc is watching the event on cine-film, because we know Anna has not worked as a ballet instructor for months,

through experience of dialogue between Marc and Heinrich on the soundtrack. *POSSESSION* like all film does not represent events that are co-current with our watching.

The pictures that make up *POSSESSION* are not the product of illusions, they are realistic pictures: pictures which are like in significant ways the things they represent, such as the streets of Berlin. And it is in their likeness to these things that we are able to recognise the content depicted. For this reason *POSSESSION* is not constructed in a linguistic medium, as Lacanian thought would suggest, nor is it in any interesting sense like a linguistic medium (Currie).

Despite the fact that *POSSESSION* is not constructed in an essentially linguistic medium, it is possible to develop a general theory of interpretation which accounts for both literature and film. Not by means of analogy, rather by accepting the commonality between several aspects of the two mediums. Currie concludes *Image and the Mind* with the statement that film requires a category for unreliable but narratorless narratives. Perhaps *POSSESSION* has found a category after all.

POSSESSION creates its own integral reality; it's not a reflection of a pre-existing Berlin, but brings into being a reality that belongs to itself. Sign and signifier here become one and representation is contained within itself. Within this reality, Zulawski simply refuses to attempt distinguishing the real and the imaginary events for the viewer. The viewer can only think what is happening, but can never be certain. That is not to say that this distinction is unimportant to Zulawski, on the contrary, it is of central importance, but his refusal to even attempt to make this distinction simply points to the fact that all meaning resides in *POSSESSION* and nothing behind it (or so Zulawski would like us to believe).

Interpretation is explanation with reference to intentional causes. With novel or film, the interpreter's task is to formulate a plausible hypothesis about the story-telling intentions of the work. But that is it. Literature and film offer different kinds of narrative possibilities:

"I wanted to go rather further, not in the direction of pure morality but in the direction of cinema: I wanted to take something that too often gets bogged down at the level of a TV soap opera up a level or two as cinema." (Zulawski)

It is tempting to compare the commonality between the narrative structure of Zulawski's films, in particular *POSSESSION*, with literary models, but again this ought

to be made with care. Zulawski, like Godard, departs from conventional cinematic narratives, beginning with literary models rather than cinematic ones: **L'IMPORTANT C'EST D'AIMER, MES NUITS SONT PLUS BELLE QUE VOUS JOURS, LA FEMME PUBLIQUE, L'AMOUR BRAQUE, NA SREBNYM GLOBIE**. With the exception of the latter two titles, at the point where the source texts reveal themselves to be under-developed in some respect: **MES NUITS SONT PLUS BELLES QUE VOUS JOURS'** central concept of the relationship between a man with a brain tumour, which gradually destroys his ability to speak, and a dancer who's cabaret act centres upon telepathy. This interesting concept is severely restricted in a linguistic form, but is released - to an extent - in film. As illustrated above **L'IMPORTANT C'EST D'AIMER** and **LA FEMME PUBLIQUE** lend themselves to a reflexive cinema that language could not possibly provide. 'Bad books make good films', wrote Burroughs. Rather than regarding film as an evolution of the literary narrative, Zulawski returns to its origin.

"There are fairy stories to be written for adults." (Breton)

POSSESSION doesn't subvert realism, it deals with reality in a different way, acknowledging a porous divide between the imaginary and the real, present in pivotal scenes in the film, most notably the scenes in Anna's yellowing flat, a dark gothic castle of sorts, only two doors along the corridor from Dorothy Vallens in **BLUE VELVET**. Once more, we return to Durgnat's dialectic, when Zulawski deals with the integral reality of **POSSESSION**. He rejects an overtly Cartesian version of reality, one grounded upon an identity of sensation and image, a rejection of the idea that seeing is believing. This is best illustrated by the most curious character in the film, Heinrich. Heinrich is introduced lecturing Marc on his reasoning behind Anna's unhappiness (according to Heinrich, Marc tries to dominate Anna, rather than harmonise with her, raising an egocentric, intellectual, yet futile barrier between himself and the rest of the world) Heinrich proves himself guilty of the same charge, revealing himself to be a very Western mystic as he pleads with his nemesis that Anna has a monster in her flat, along with several mutilated bodies, and that Marc should send him on a trip to India to restore his harmony! Comparison between the differences in Marc's reaction when he finds nobody looking after Bob in his flat to his

complacency when presiding over his wife having sex with a giant tentacled monster supports this argument.

The integral reality of **POSSESSION** is not equated with what is visually perceptible, but with what is established through the dynamic relationship with the imaginary. The imaginary is what tends to become real. (Breton) The image is not formed purely from visual sensations. Harold J. Morowitz presents an argument in his essay *Rediscovering the Mind* that Gestalt psychology and quantum physics have above all shown how what we see is mediated through a whole series of operations that involve the senses: our image of a thing is not established only by its visual qualities.

Anna's desire tends towards its own realisation and transformation takes place when her desire shatters the bounds of the possible, breaking what the dialectical equilibrium is holding together, the framework of what is existent (Richardson), whether it be Anna's creature or something of equal convulsive beauty. Marc's rationalism on the other hand is undermined in every way. In the narrative the structure of everyday Berlin is rarely fractured. If one was to remove all the scenes involving the creature, the fragments of what is left are individually plausible, even banal. Marc takes Bob to school, Anna scrubs the floor, prepares dinner, goes shopping, they argue endlessly. But the reality is redefined in a way that seems to connect up with the traditional fairy story, even if the subject matter and thematic concerns are generally markedly different.

POSSESSION is not a surrealist fairy-tale narrative, tied to a Hegelian notion of "objective chance", a continuity between necessity and chance when one manifests the other, like *Nadja*.

"It's like those two sisters of faith and chance... well my faith can exclude chance but chance? Oh sh... well it's like those two sisters of faith and chance, my faith can't exclude chance but my chance can, can't explain faith. My faith didn't allow me to wait for chance and chance didn't give me enough faith..." (Anna, to camera)

For Hegel, chance cannot exist, for as chance is the other of system, it cannot be integrated into a system of absolute knowledge (Hollier). This is best illustrated by comparing Bataille's writings to Breton. Bataille believed that absolute knowledge was blinding, and hides the very real obscurity of non-knowledge, an obscene base material-

ism. Bataille discusses chance in his text on Nietzsche, where chance is linked to anguish. Anguish, like chance, is an impossible obscurity. Anguish says: impossible: the impossible remains at the mercy of chance. Furthermore: anguish alone defines chance entirely: chance is what the anguish in me regards as impossible. Anguish is the contestation of chance. (Hollier). Anna's, screams, tears, excrement (the waste products of the system), give rise to chance. Chance is Nietzsche's love of fate which is opposed to the equilibrium of Hegel's system. (Hollier).

If sorting out what is fantasy and what is reality in **POSSESSION** transpires to be completely irrelevant, pursuing a distinction rapidly becomes misleading. **POSSESSION** is constructed according to a form that resists being reduced to a story - say, the story about the relationship (however ambiguous and abstract) between Anna and Marc. Anna's madness is neither explained from a rational point of view nor left totally unexplained. Therefore, this reduces **POSSESSION** to a single dimension of psychology, one which, as Linda Williams suggests, goes beyond simply presenting Anna's madness and takes on an almost pure expression of unconscious desire, through the abandonment of narrative logic and the questioning of identity of the once unitary self. A Jungian psychology involving doublings of once unitary selves: Anna and Helen. And a psychology that lends form to language. Zulawski's happy ending in **POSSESSION** is a satirical gauge of Anna's somewhat Catholic experience of inner divinity:

"Divine?.. perhaps you met God a minute ago and you didn't even realise it! Now you believe in God, certainly, in that great incomprehensible God you reach through fucking or dope, am I right?" (Marc to Heinrich); tending towards the process of individualisation, a whole archetype of the self represented as an image of God. *"Do you believe in God? It's in me!"* cries an ecstatic Anna, before the film's climax.

I've seen half of God's face here, the other half is you.
(Heinrich's postcard to Anna)

Heinrich: *There is nothing to fear except God, whatever that means to you.*

Marc: *To me, God is a disease.*

Heinrich: *That's why through disease we can reach God.*

The figure of Christ loses its wholeness, excluding the anima/shadow side as Anna. The sexual nature of the

feminine is darkened and repressed, leaving a Christ figure so over-identified it casts a shadow, a dark mysterious feminine type, represented when Anna squirms under the cross.

God doesn't manifest himself while our being remains in it's proper balanced form; and only when existence exceeds this life and leaves behind it something like the outlines of people left on the stone steps of Hiroshima (or the streets of Berlin) after the atomic bomb was dropped, then God will manifest himself. (from Yukio Mishima's introduction to Madame Edwarda).

Zulawski's Jungian psychology is (crucially) left in an intermediate state. Anna and Helen both take on and mock Jung's concept of the anima, their distorted appearance as both virgin and whore: *"Oh yes! A monster, a whore, I fuck around with everybody!"*, continuing on a less sarcastic note: *"No-one is good or bad, but if you want I am the bad one and if I knew he existed in this world I would never have had Bob with you!"*, and later, *"Goodness is only some kind of reflection upon evil."* Marc soon finds out that Anna's soul image, Logos (reason) is flagging desperately in her search for knowledge, truth and meaning: *"You can't just say you don't know when will you know? When will you know?"* Anna defends herself: *"Right! Right you are always right! But it is difficult don't you understand it is difficult. I didn't want it to happen but its happened."*

It is interesting to compare Jung's psychological staging of religion and the consistent characters that feature in Zulawski's work: The Archaic Stage of shamans plays a significant part in **SZAMANKA**; The prophets that feature in **NA SREBNYM GLOBIE** and the Christian heritage, primarily in the form of mystical Heinrich, and the desperate philosophical musings of Anna; - all characters share the inner experience of divinity, wholeness, the archetype of self, represented as an image of God.

However, **POSSESSION** still appears to be incomplete. As it stands, the miscarriage scene doesn't make sense. But as in any fairy tale, it is irrelevant whether it makes any sense - just how could the princess determine that a pea was situated under a hundred mattresses? Even if it is obvious what the story implies, an explanation is left absent. Dennis Fischer's critique of **POSSESSION** looks in vain for a dormant plot, but ends with him throwing his hands up in despair: *"There simply is no anchor of sanity in this film; no touch point with reality that an audience can relate to. By and large, the film will leave most audiences bored, angry or confused."*

Fischer's intention throughout watching the film seemed nothing more than to, in Sontag's words, ferret out the story line as if the author had - through mere clumsiness or error or frivolity or lack of craft - concealed it. In **POSSESSION**, it is a question not of a plot that has been mislaid but of one that has been partly annulled. Zulawski's intention should be taken at face value and respected. **POSSESSION** attains its emotional and aesthetic weight precisely through this incomprehensibility. As with the obscurity of Zulawski's own poetry, it isn't a deficiency in the work but an important technical means for accumulating and compounding relevant emotions and for establishing different levels of sense. (Sontag) The hallucinatory, absurd, abstracted story, dictates the form of **POSSESSION**. If it warrants the adjective Kafkaesque it brings with it Bataille's praise of that author's completely childish attitude. At this point it is perhaps wise to abandon Sontag's criteria for new cinema as a framework here. **POSSESSION** is not so much an evolution in narrative terms, rather a regression to the terms of the fairy tale. To understand it, the viewer must go beyond the psychological point of view. Only by keeping the psychological aspects intermediate can Zulawski peruse an abstract narrative that retains the elegance of a fairy tale.

If the resounding hallucinatory quality of **POSSESSION** is to predominate by such mechanisms, **POSSESSION** itself must become obscure. And if that upsets Dennis Fischer, tough. **POSSESSION** is violent in the true sense of the word; to paraphrase the Detroit Free Press description of Bataille; Zulawski films as if he were dropping an atomic bomb.

Daniel Bird

Bibliography:

- Barber, Antonin Artaud, Faber 1993
 Bataille, Madame Edvarda, Literature and Evil,
 Marion Bovers 1995
 Currie, *Image and Mind* Cambridge University Press 1995.
 Fischer, **POSSESSION** in *Cinefantastique* Vol 14/5 1984
 Gallant, **POSSESSION** in *The Goblin* No. 7
 Hollier, *Against Architecture* The writings of Georges Bataille MIT press 1989
 Richardson, After word in *The Myth Of The World*, Dedalus 1994
 Sontag, *Against Interpretation* (1964), in *Against Interpretation* Vintage 1994
 Sontag, *Theatre and Film* (1966), Bergman's *Persona* (1967), Godard (1968) in *Styles of a Radical Will* Vintage 1994

Zulawski's **POSSESSION**

The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters by Stephen Thrower

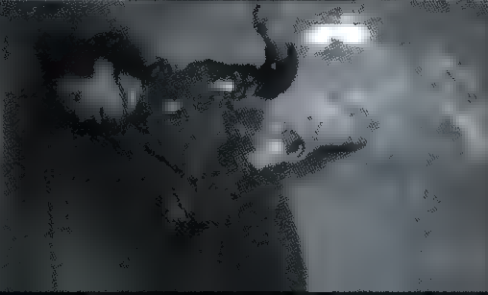
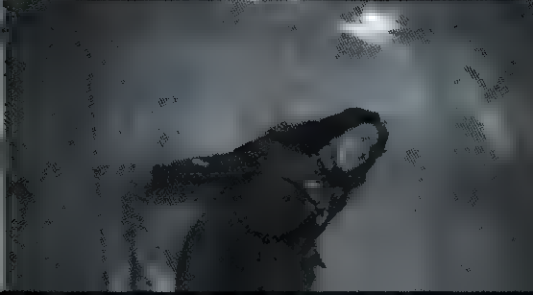
Trying to begin an article about **POSSESSION**, after all this time a film I've never sat down to review, I feel a bit like Marc taking the taxi back to his apartment and his increasingly disturbed wife, Anna. Trepidatious, aware of a difficulty, like those strained moments on the kerbside, fiddling awkwardly with luggage, trying to make sense of a situation - a film, a woman - that becomes stranger as one approaches. Getting back into the film is like trying to step back into a previous life after much time alone elsewhere - with the polar bears - being a secret agent with all the implications of cracking codes and subterfuge. Now faced with an insoluble code, stubbornly and sublimely indifferent to the usual decoder's tools. No psychoanalysis, no semiotics, no auteur-theory, one senses that this is an intransigent problem - all about unsolvability. How do you respond to this conundrum about the indefinable? Psychoanalysis or semiotic film theory can only create models or (especially with semiotics) papier-maché moulds of the contours of this film. Assembled, they remain essentially hollow. An absence exhibited in a theoretician's gallery: 'the one that got away'.

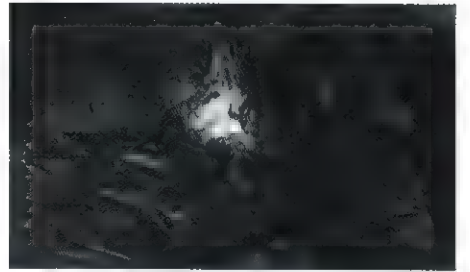
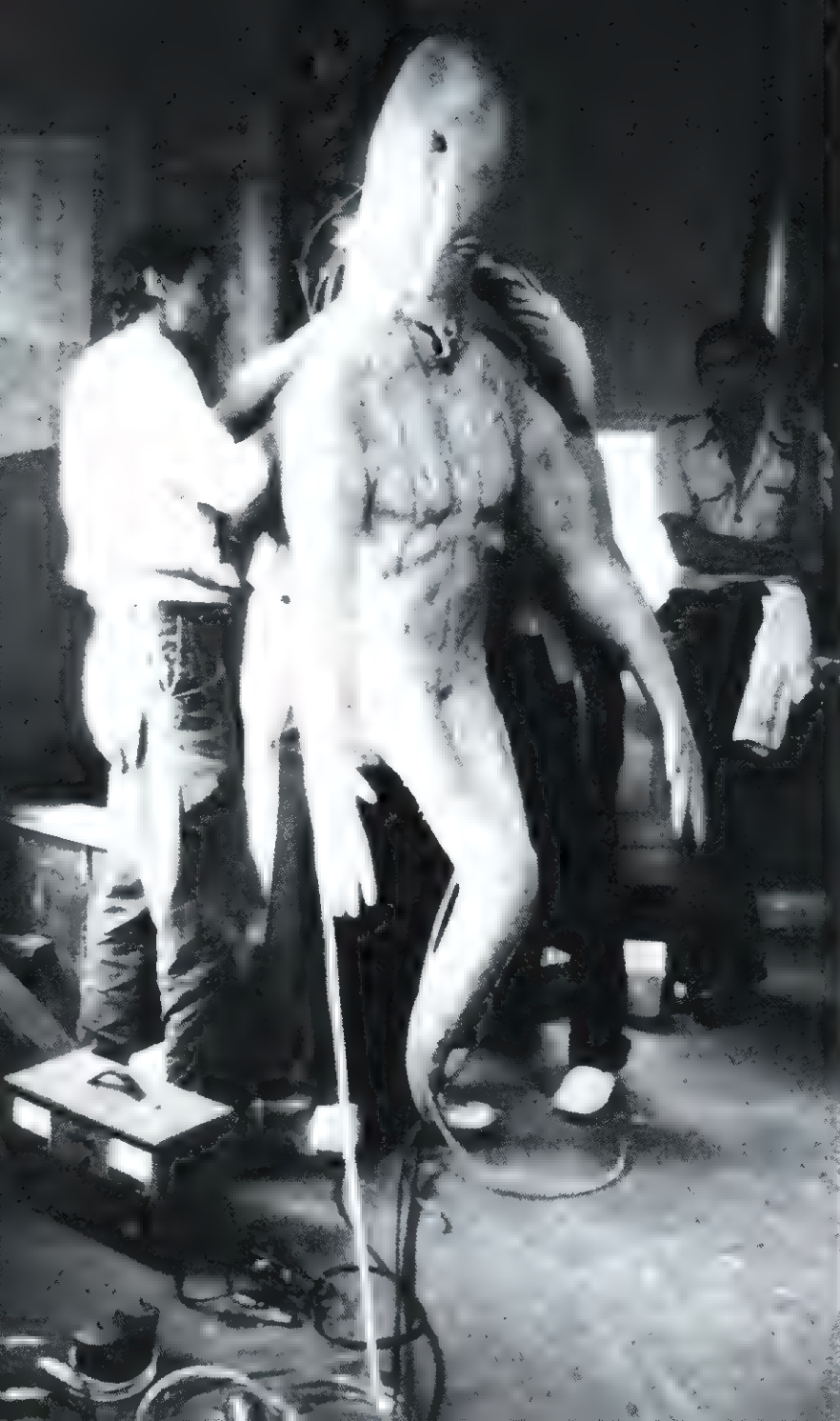
Marc can be our chaperone into the film. The first shot is of a wreath, mounted for obscure reasons on a wooden cross before a filthy wall. Heaven's end. Marc's taxi takes him past this tableau and on to be re-united (not) with his wife and son.

Marc: "You can't just say you don't know, that's what you said on the phone. When will you know?"

Anna: "I... don't know"

The first dialogue of the film sets the tone for what is to follow. A request for clarification meets with a lingual recursion. Anna's first words start the ball of undecidability rolling. We can speculate that the question to which Anna, in a scene we never saw, answered "I don't know" is to do with a marital crisis; that much is clear from the lack of affection as they stand before each other, and the way in which Anna turns and walks back to the apartment without offering to help carry Marc's bags. It's not long before this supposition is supported, after a brief vignette of family harmony - young son Bob in the bath, Marc the proud father calls to Anna: "Come and admire him" (like the infant Jesus, 'Oh Come Let Us Adore Him'!)





Sooner than feels quite "...proper", we are listening in on a quiet couple-in-bed conversation, melancholy, a darkened room and blue-lit bedding seen from above like a slide under a microscope. Two heads on two pillows and a noticeable space between them. *"Perhaps all couples go through this."* It's Marc's attempt to discuss the damaged state of their relationship, but it ends inconclusively with resentment and asymmetry. Anna: *"Were you unfaithful to me?"* Marc: *"The truth is not really. Were you? There's always someone else when these things happen."* Anna: *"Not in this case."* No communication, no friendship, no love.

Marc has been away for some time. He seems to be a sort of spy, interrogated on his return to Berlin by a group of enigmatic superiors, around whom the camera performs a beautiful circuit of the huge (virtually empty) room. The shot is grandiose, ecstatically pointless. You can hear the dolly clanking in the acoustically bare room. Why not post-synch the sound? Instead, Zulawski keeps the mechanical noise which poignantly destroys the perfection of the elaborate camera movement (as he will consistently destroy the fixed relationship between viewer and film-maker throughout). Surveillance and paranoia form a backdrop to **POSSESSION**, but Zulawski can't resist the imperative of directorial honesty he's picked up from Godard. Art has a relationship to acknowledge if it wishes to avoid exploitation, the connection it seeks is itself part of the meaning. Art is a process...

"This is the most difficult word in this whole discourse of mine, what is true?" - Zulawski

"All's fair in love and war." - William Shakespeare

"Nothing is true. Everything is permitted." - Hassan I Sabbah

"Supposing truth to be a woman - what? Is the suspicion not well founded that all philosophers, when they have been dogmatists, have had little understanding of women? That the gruesome earnestness, the clumsy importunity with which they have hitherto been in the habit of approaching truth have been inept and improper means for winning a wench?" - Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good And Evil*.

Marc is often seen alone in his sitting room at the beginning of the film. Waiting for Anna, falling into reverie by the window. The telephone rings, but Anna hangs up on him. He rings Margie, his ex-lover and Anna's friend... but she hangs up on him. Despite arrogance, flinty determination, Marc is

soon in trouble, hanging on the telephone for the first half-hour of **POSSESSION**. Without male friends (just 'superiors'), Marc has to 'solve' the problem of Anna himself. His first port of call is the notion of the 'other man', a man he duly finds in Heinrich, whose significant postcard is the first signpost to the horror at the heart of **POSSESSION** *I've seen half of God's face here. The other half is you.* Later Anna will say to Marc, *"Do you believe in God? It's in me."*

Zulawski's concerns are philosophical (and religious) rather than psychoanalytical, which makes him inaccessible to many critics (who have boned up on Freud *et al* but have yet to boldly go beyond the framework of F-slips and dreamwork). Perhaps the reason why Freud is more appealing than a thinker like Nietzsche is that the former suggested extreme symptoms were contained within the repressive (but very successful) confines of civilisation. Contrast Nietzsche's *"Man is something which must be overcome"*. Film criticism also got bogged down in psychoanalysis because we tend to consider characters in a narrative as if they were real, drawn with greater or lesser accuracy, 'depth' of characterisation. Philosophical enquiry would not make such haste to assign 'psychology' to these constructs. Most films accept this framework and exploit it themselves; films that incorporate awareness of artifice (like **POSSESSION**) are often deemed pretentious, when in fact this is potentially the least pretentious of techniques!

It's often interesting to see children's acting technique, and the actor playing young Bob in **POSSESSION** is a skilled purveyor of verisimilitude. The reason children can be such good actors is that they're still young enough not to have convinced themselves that speech isn't a performance, that it's 'natural'. Speech is profoundly self-conscious to young children, not yet a habit, not yet absorbed into the vague set we call 'being'.

Jacques Lacan's assertion that the unconscious is structured like a language begins to seem motivated by his encroaching awareness that the whole edifice of psychoanalysis was collapsing, dying. By fusing the psychological with the lingual/semiotic he found, like a chess player escaping for the last time from an implacable check-mate, one final convulsive theoretical manoeuvre, one that might postpone but not prevent the end of the system of thought he practised. The unconscious is structured like a language? Well, he would say that...

POSSESSION parodies psychoanalysis (*"When I was a boy I had a dog and his name was Louie"*), detection (*"My inter-*

est stems from the fact that... I live with that detective"), Zen mysticism ("yin-yang balls dangling from your Zen brain"), religion ("Perhaps you just met God back there and didn't even realise it") and semiotics ("Does our suspect still wear pink socks?"). This negation and refusal of meaning-systems is sustained and programmatic, perhaps the only programmatic aspect of the film. Psychoanalysis is reduced to the lachrymose memories of childhood trauma over the death of a pet ("I wanted to see what it was that made him yelp so"). Detection, which starts out as masculine probing (Marc's "sheer blind ambition") is channeled via two gay private eyes who subsequently end up murdered by the woman they're trailing. Mysticism is explicitly rejected in Heinrich's death ("I knew a man who loved everything, and he died in a flood of shit"). Christianity is turned to comical sideshow during the scene of Anna's desperate visit to a church ("Mmmm... mmmmm!.... Mmm?... MmmmmMmMMMMmm!?!?").

There is a good reason for all this rejecting of structural values and interpretation. Anna and Marc are experiencing a situation which cannot be explained. If it could be, as Zulawski says in the interview with Daniel Bird and myself reprinted elsewhere in this book, divorce would never happen, relationships would never break down. Something no-one really understands comes between us, something which can destroy or slowly eat away at peoples' ability to get on with each other. How obscene (and how all-too common) it would be for a film-maker to present a story of characters struggling to cope with an unfathomable event and then lard an exterior interpretation over it, by use of symbolism and irony not appreciable to the characters. The film keeps good faith with Marc and Anna in this respect. No answers are ladled over the narrative. Zulawski (whose films always seem to involve chaotic violence erupting in chic restaurants) is not a chef obsessed with the sauce (his gourmet delicacies share the maddening flavours of the Futurist Cookbook). He's in there with the actors and actresses, with the roles they are playing, struggling to express the inexpressible. Anna's monologue to 16mm camera explicitly presents her struggle to define an indefinable ache, some pain that possesses her in the very grain of experience, of perception, and something certainly beyond the power of language to exorcise.

"Although there can be no doubt that psychological disturbances play a considerable part in the genesis of hysterical symptoms, it is important to realize that in nearly two-thirds of patients

presenting to hospital with such symptoms, there will be some evidence of pre-existing or developing brain injury or disease. It has been suggested that the capacity for manifesting acute hysterical illness is something which is built into the central nervous system to protect it from overwhelming stress. If the brain is damaged or diseased, there is an increased possibility for this innate mechanism to spring into action, especially if an added psychological stress serves as a trigger. Thus hysterical symptoms may be the first indication that some hitherto unsuspected brain disease is developing." - F.A. Whitlock, "The aetiology of hysteria" (1967)

"I recognise the self who has just done something horrible like a sister I casually met in the street, 'hello sister!' It's like those two sisters of faith and chance - well my faith can exclude chance but chance? Oh sh- ...well it's like those two sisters of faith and chance, my faith can't exclude chance but my chance can, can't explain faith; my faith didn't allow me to wait for chance, and chance didn't give me enough faith - well then I read that private life is only a stage, that one plays many parts that are smaller than me but I still play them, I suffer I believe, I am, but at the same time I know there is a third possibility like cancer or madness - but cancer or madness contort reality, the possibility I am talking about pierces reality." (Anna)

There are systems which claim to either negate or encrypt transcendence (psychoanalysis and semiotics on the one hand, mysticism and religion on the other), Zulawski is striving to find a third possibility (not through dialectical synthesis either!). **POSSESSION** is a film trying to get out, out of the endless skein of the world, out of its head. Not on sex and drugs (spat contemptuously by Marc: "fucking...or dope!"), nor through religious mania. Nevertheless, there is an engagement with one of the great Decadent traditions, the seeking of states akin to madness. This is pursued through an attempt to fuse the representational and actual during the moment of performance in the film. Anna's convulsive attack in the subway is also Isabelle Adjani's convulsion. What makes the scene so unique is the terror and admiration one feels for the actress as she fuses with her desperate character. The human and non-human, matter, mind, solid, liquid, gas, magnetism, gravity, light, are all conjoined and made of the same material, all created in the furnace of the Big Bang. This omnivalency of things is only fleetingly perceptible in its vastness (how often has Carlo Rambaldi's creation of the monster in **POSSESSION** been

likened to H.P. Lovecraft? And with good reason; Lovecraft's obsession was the idea of a vaster, maddeningly superior world beyond the everyday groping of our own senses). The response is convulsive. Anna's convulsions, Adjani's convulsions, Zulawski's and even ours as we partake of this film experience, are the frantic topological squirmings of a multiplied totality trying to be rid of itself.

Some people say there's a word for this: hysteria. **POSSESSION** is an hysterical film, its critics complain, as if this were reason to ignore it; this from writers all-too-happy to use psychoanalysis as a critical tool. Heaven help a hysteric in the hands of such 'doctors'! For the way they use the word is merely in its 'lay', derogatory mode. The film doesn't need 'help' of course. (It's not a patient film!) To translate from the personal to the textual, what it requires - and deserves - is study and consideration. Shallow criticism about Zulawski's 'hysterical' style is particularly obtuse when one considers that many of the film's excesses actually address the hysterical condition in a self-conscious way.

There are two types of hysteria recognised in psychiatry today and both feed into the bizarre behaviour exhibited by Zulawski's characters. The first is 'conversion hysteria': features of which include paralysis, convulsions, losses of sensation, blindness, speech abnormalities, and ataxic gait. This category was, via Freud, usually said to be caused by the repression of sexual drives, although later thinking discards much of this in favour of psychological factors like anxiety and depression.

Taking these symptoms one by one... Paralysis: before Anna kills the first detective, Immanuel, she struggles for a few seconds to initiate her attack, trembling as if struggling against paralysis whilst trying to wield a bottle as a weapon... Convulsions: Anna's extraordinary experience in the subway is only the most spectacular of a whole host of convulsive outbreaks... Losses of sensation: Marc slices his arm with an electric bread-knife following Anna's example earlier when she'd cut her neck with the gadget. *"It doesn't hurt"*, she says. *"No..."*, remarks Marc, sounding almost bored... Blindness: When Anna shows Heinrich the creature he stumbles around the flat in comical fashion, arms outstretched, momentarily blinded... Speech abnormalities: Marc's stay at a hotel in the wake of a major row with Anna sees him sweat-soaked, unshaven and distressed, unable to form a word except for the sound "M...m...m" ... Ataxic gait: Numerous examples of unco-ordinated movement of the limbs, including Heinrich and the detectives at Anna's

apartment, Marc's staggering arrhythmic gait as he stumbles round the hotel. And then there's Marge, *"the angel of the extinct heart, limping to the rescue"* in her plaster cast. She even falls over, just to rub it in...

"The individual who enters into a fugue state is sometimes escaping from an intolerable situation or suffering from a severe depression. This wandering behavior has been equated with an act of suicide, with the patient seeking some state of nirvana which will free him from his worldly cares and responsibilities." - Whitlock...

Then there's dissociative hysteria: fugues, trances, twilight states, amnesias and multiple personality. Fugues - wandering away from one's usual environment, with subsequent amnesia. Anna's seeking of a second and secret home in which she can nurture the monster she has given birth to suggests the fugue state. She's cultivating a second strand or parallel life away from both her husband and her egomaniac mystic lover Heinrich. However, just like Fred Madison in David Lynch's **LOST HIGHWAY**, Anna cannot totally expunge the details of the life she's trying to escape. Details keep pressing in on her. She returns impulsively at erratic intervals to the flat where she's meant to be caring for Bob. Marc notices the problem: *"I guess when you're there you want to be home, and when you're home you want to be there."* This urge to wander away from an intolerable life into a new situation continues even as Marc allies himself with her madness. The last quarter of **POSSESSION** is a frantic whirl of new environments, restless and frenetic.

Zulawski exhibits a childlike, even childish quality (a condition that we adults like to call anarchy). He's very demanding but doesn't know quite what it is he's seeking. One senses a dissatisfaction with the mundane, and it is this urge to generate new, possibly dangerous situations that can shake the foundations of many a relationship. He says that **POSSESSION** draws considerably in its early stages from his personal experience of the breakdown of his marriage to actress Malgorzata Braunek (who played a dual role in his first feature **THE THIRD PART OF THE NIGHT**). One could look at **POSSESSION** as a portrayal of the stresses between artistic striving for the sublime (and dangerous) and the yearning for security that is domestic life, a theme explored by Godard in **PIERROT LE FOU**. There are also parallels with Nicolas Roeg's **BAD TIMING**, which concerned the relationship between an impulsive,

energetic free-spirited woman and an intellectual control-freak. Anna and Marc... Andrzej and Malgorzata. Even though Zulawski tells us he used dialogue *verbatim* from rows with his ex-wife, the shifting of initials suggests we'll never know who's who.

The point at which **POSSESSION** heads off into uncharted territory is when we first see the monster, a gelatinous, phallus-headed amphibian shrouded in darkness and slime but undeniably there. (Shall we ride the feminist merry-go-round after that description? Let's not...) The first outsider to witness the creature is gay private eye Immanuel, whose initial response is to fumble for his glasses and squint again at the shape in the gloom of Anna's bedroom. "*He is very tired. He made love to me all last night*", she sighs. We experience an almighty lurch of perception as this being emerges from the narrative and transforms it completely. We are witnessing an impossibility, something that has torn - or osmosed - through the barrier between the metaphorical and the diegetically actual (Anna's possibility that "*pierces reality*"). This 'thing' in lesser hands, in a less ambitious film, would have remained a symbol or a metaphor in language - or simply the delusion of a deranged unreliable character. Yet here it is, before the astonished, mesmerized gaze of a whole array of other characters. "*A monster, a joke, but it was alive*" cries wounded Heinrich to a less than sympathetic Marc ("*Bleed for a while*").

The setting for this extraordinary appearance is hardly your conventional melodrama. It's a tribute to the dynamics of **POSSESSION** that we can approach the creature with stunned amazement but not with disbelief or impatience. (Without the film's oft-derided excesses beforehand *no way* would we accept this manifestation!) However, the shock couldn't be bettered if the creature had all of a sudden appeared in a Woody Allen film. There's an exhilarating feeling of some barely apprehended law being suddenly, shockingly broken.

There are two problems with the monster. The first is whether or not it is the 'father' of the thing Anna later 'miscarries' (as she says) in the subway. This preserves the sequence of events but fails to explain where the monster itself came from. Or is it in fact the monster that we see Anna giving birth to, with the birth scene being shown later, out of sequence?

The second problem is to do with its resonance as symbolic of something. Can it even be symbolic, given its

presence to other characters? Zulawski (like the Russian maestro Andrei Tarkovsky) often seems impatient with the strictures of what we call symbolic representation. To call the monster symbolic of something or other is to ignore its presence as an actual participant in the physical events of the film. You may as well ask what Marc symbolises, what Anna symbolises. Just because the creature can't talk doesn't make it merely the repository of some symbolic load. (and perhaps it can even talk: Marc receives a telephone call, "*Anna is with me, and she'll stay with me*"... Yet later the presumed caller, Heinrich, plausibly denies making the call: "*Stop it, I just arrived from Hamburg.*")

The doubling of Anna with the creation of the school-teacher Helen is a strong harbinger of doom and the annihilation of identity. It also acts to show Marc's dismay at the gulf between him and his wife. Relationships that degenerate into bitter rows and fights, like Marc and Anna's, can seem all the more sad when one sees the other interacting with other people, they can perhaps catch a glimpse of the person they used to know through their miraculously healthy responses to others. If only that version of the garrulous loved one were mine, they might think. Lovers discharge emotions and cut loose with their darkness in a way unthinkable between friends, it's one of the tragedies of love. Marc's conversations with the angelically calm and radiant Helen show him trying to understand Anna, so that the scenes are less to do with infidelity (though at a prosaic level they are) and more to do with Marc's own fugue state, a conjuration of a 'pre-possessed' wife and the semblance of an easier life.

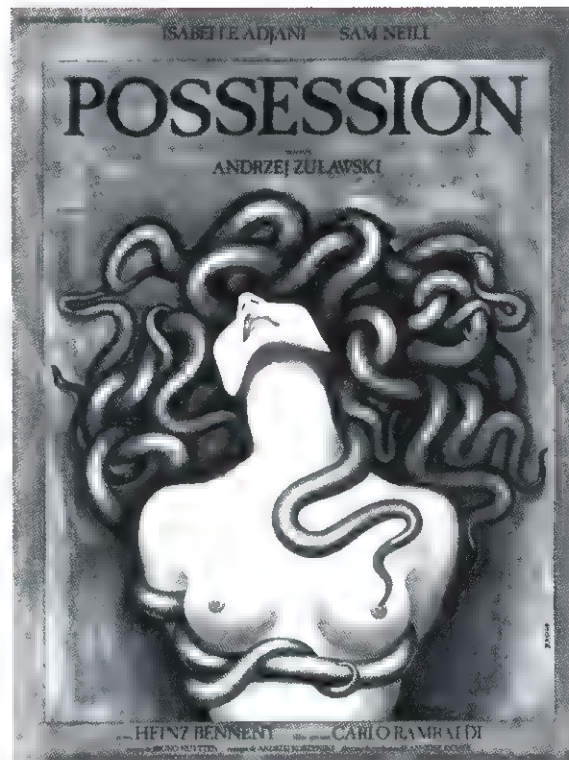
Most critics like to project the appearance of being 'in the know', and react predictably to **POSSESSION**'s disinclination to offer itself passively for analysis. To know is to close, to call a halt, to end the chase - and to most logocentric thinkers it *is* a chase, meant to end with the critic ripping the guts out of the quarry to be displayed like a trophy. No wonder **POSSESSION** riles so many people, as it makes a virtue of obscurity and raises the impossibility of full access to phenomena of the mind. Frustrating and intangible, part of the film's wind-up is its apparent embarrassment of symbolic riches. There's so much density, ('semiotic thickness' - what a phrase!), the tangled narrative seems to positively beg the viewer to organise its convolutions, de-collage and stream its juxtapositions, access its abstractions. Yet once you start, horizons recede and structures slyly disassemble; an Escher-like narrative built on

forced perspectives, a film bursting with paradoxical information. For some audiences (and critics of course) this can feel like being jerked around, it's as if Zulawski isn't 'playing fair'. With Freud on one arm and Jung on the other, the 'sophisticated' critic knows there's a party going on somewhere nearby but despite the sounds of mischief and revelry (must be some party, listen to the screams), can't seem to find their way in.

POSSESSION is clangorous and discordant, full of wild verbal excesses, excesses borne of desperation, the way people feel when no matter how passionate, how quick-witted or understanding or open-minded they are, they fear that all is in vain. Rows between Anna and Marc are brilliantly observed episodes of total communication prolapse, verbal and even physical violence are expended but to no avail. That no decoding strategy can redistribute the film's wild energies, lock its loose ends into solid coherence, only ensures that it remains breathtaking at each repeated viewing. It's also a very beautiful film, with Zulawski's most audacious and creative use of the camera making each scene resonate. There are literally no boring shots in this film, no wasted spaces, no tedious or careless set-ups. Whilst the actors create maximum tension with the extraordinary script, Bruno Nuytten's camera seduces and transforms. Never again would Sam Neill look as he does here, strange and tormented. And Adjani is so mercurial at times only a freeze frame can keep up with the shifts of expression coursing through her features.

POSSESSION is a film about love, about being and performance, about belief in God, about the absurdities of our attempts to understand the human situation. It leaves us at the limit of evolution (the DNA spiral suggested by the staircase ascended first by Marc and Anna, then by the monster finally metamorphosed into Marc's double, a perfected clone). The sound of (synthesized) bombs dropping accompanies the 'almost' union of perfect Helen and new man Marc in the final shot, and continues over the end credits. On the brink of another World War what solutions can there be? Wars involve a surplus of certainties, too many 'rights' pointing the finger at too many 'wrongs'. **POSSESSION** plays a different game; its ability to pose relentlessly unanswerable questions is its greatest strength.

"The will to truth, which is still going to tempt us to many a hazardous enterprise; that celebrated veracity of which all philosophers have hitherto spoken with reverence: what



questions this will to truth has already set before us! What strange, wicked, questionable questions! It is already a long story - yet does it not seem as if it has only just begun? Is it any wonder we should at last grow distrustful, lose our patience, turn impatiently away? That this sphinx should teach us too to ask questions? Who really is it that here questions us? What really in us is it that wants 'the truth'? - We did indeed pause for a long time before the question of the origin of this will - until finally we came to a complete halt before an even more fundamental question. We asked after the value of this will. Granted we want truth: why not rather untruth? And uncertainty? Even ignorance? - The problem of the value of truth stepped before us - or was it we who stepped before this problem? Which of us is Oedipus here? Which of us Sphinx? It is, it seems, a rendezvous of question-marks." - Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*.

INDEX

Compiled by Francis Brewster

Page references in **bold** refer exclusively to illustrations though pages referenced as text entries may also feature relevant illustrations

100 000 Dollars for Ringo 263
 11 Days, 11 Nights 338
 120 Days of Sodom (book) 269
 2 or 3 Things I Know About Her 235
 2001 A Space Odyssey 42
 36 Hours 244
 36 15 - Code Pere Noel 187
 7. Hyde Park 263
 8 1/2 111, 140, 294
 99 9 351

**** 156

À bout de souffle 301, 312
 Abagnalo, George 198
 Abigail's Party 106, 200
 Abraham, F. Murray 139
 Accardo, Salvatore 295
 Adamson, Al 241
 Adebare 92
 Adjani, Isabelle **60** 62, 63, 65, 66, 70 **366** 367-370,
375, 378, 379, 381
 Adorf, Mario 331, 332
 Adorno, Theodor 199, 309
Adrenalin - Fear the Rush 122
Adventures of Baron Munchausen, The 18, 113
Africa Addio 342, 359
Against Nature (book) 310, 311
age d'or L' 42
Agneszka (short film) 362
 Aguayo Jr., José F. 192
 Aickman, Robert 152
 Airoldi, Cristina 209 210
 Abee, Edward 301
 Albertazzi, Giorgio 131
 Albertini, Giampiero 212
 Accott, Robert 179
 Adrich, Ann *see* Packer, Vin
 Adrich, John 359
 Adrich, Robert 158
 Aekman, Henri 135
 Al Bek, Ken 122
 Alice Adams 107
Alien 119
All About My Mother 351
 Alien, Lewis 151
 Alen, Woody 294, 305 379
 Allingham, William 177
 Almiral, Rosa *see* Romay, Lina
 Almodovar, Pedro 271, 272 351
Almost Human 232
Alphaville 148
 Alter, John 80
 Altman, Robert 161, 173 181 249-252 329
 Altom, John L. **36**
 Alvina, Anicee 134, 135

Amadeus 295
 Amadio, Silvio 189, 190
Ambiguous Report About the End of the World, An
166
Ambulance, The 259
America (book) 297, 300
 Améry, Jean 134, 135
 Amis, Kingsley 106, 152
Amityville 2: The Possession **182** 187-189, **191**
Amityville Horror, The 188
Amore inquieto di Maria 216
Amour à Vingt Ans, L' 147
amour braque, L' 63, 372
amour de sorcière, Un 187
amour, L' 29, 156, 163
Amuck! 189-190
Ancient Sorcerers (book) 151
And the Band Played On 122
 Anders, Allison 156
 Andersen, Carl 277, 278
Andersens märchen von der leibe 278
 Anderson, Lindsay 172
Andreï Rublev 65
 Andrews, Dana 152, **153**
Andromeda Strain, The 120
Andy Warhol Film Factory (book) 156
Angel of Vengeance 193
 Anger, Kenneth 8, 98, 314
Angst 42, 47
 Ankers, Evelyn 153
Anta myer 351
Antigone's Cut 91, 96
 Antone li, Laura 317
 Antonioni, Michelangelo 6, 85, 86, 97, 131, 162 296,
 297, 300-303, 305
Ape Man, The **104**, 106
Apocalypse of an Earthquake 216
 Apollinaire, Guillaume 167
Apt Pupil (book) 351
 Araki, Gregg 156 329
 Arana, Thomas **16**, 18
Arcane Enchanter, The 139, 141
 Arena 113
 Argento, Asia 70
 Argento, Dario 6-8, 13, 15, 17-19, 70, 85-88, 113,
 126, 144, 180 189, 209, 212, 215, 216, 230 232
 234, 254 257 262, 269, 291, 292, 294 316 332
 336, 344 356 365, 370
Armageddon 174
 Armstrong, Hugh **78**
 Amfred, Morten 258
Arnulf Rainer 92
 Aro, Tolbukhin 351
 Arrabal, Fernando 351
 Ambas, Fernando 211
Art of Darkness (book) 8

Artaud, Antonin 69 276, 370 371
 Artgot, Raoul 230
Arts Politics Cinema - The Cineaste Interviews (book)
 341
*As the Moon *see* Comme la lune*
*Ashes *see* Popoly*
 Ashley, Mike 152
 Astaire, Fred 114
Atlantis Interceptors, The 18
Atlas Against the Cyclops 360
Au Pair Girls 244
 Auberjonois, René 249, 250
 Audley, Maxine 245
Aus der ferne 96
 Austen, Jane 105
Autobiography of Cinema, The (book) 240
Autopsia 6, 190, **191**, 192
 Avari, Antonio 140, 269
 Avari, Pupi 17, 139-144, 246, 248, 269, 336 352,
 353, 364, 365
 Avenet-Bradley, Brian 37 39
 Avenet-Bradley, Laurence **38** 39
 Avram, Chris 333
avventura, L. 86, 296, 303

 B., Agnes 41
Baby Blood 193
Baby Doll 198
 Baccaro, Salvatore 201, **203**
 Bach, Barbara 331
 Bach, Johann Sebastian 100
Bad 29, 156, **194**, 195-200
Bad Timing 313, 379
 Baker, Carrol **184**, 192, 195, 197, 252 259 260, **265**
 Baker, Ginger 79
 Baker, Stanley 244, 245
 Bakos, Karel 168
 Balch, Antony 97, 174, 310
 Baldi, Ferdinando 343, 344
 Baldiga, Jürgen 97
Balsamus, l'uomo di Satana 139, 140
*Balsamus, Man of Satan *see* Balsamus l'uomo di Satana*
 Balzac, Honoré de 132, 160, 202, 204, 206
 Bard, Charles 113
bandera negra, La 266
 Banderas, Antonio 271
 Barbetti, Cesare 364, 365
 Barbieri, Franco 237
 Barboo, Luis 230
 Bardot, Brigitte 33
 Barker, Cive 221
Baron Blood 237
Barry Lyndon 295
 Barry, George 49, 50, **51**, 217
 Barrymore, John Drew 360

- Barthes, Roland 86, 91 135, 276, 297
Basket Case 193
Bat, The 105
 Bataille, Georges 58 69 135, 370, 372-374
Bathers, The 96
 Battcock, Gregory 157
 Batzela, Luigi 200, 201
 Baudelaire, Charles 223, 224 311
 Baudrillard, Jean 69, 275, 297, 300
 Bava, Lamberto 17, 126 141, 181 237, 269-271 352, 353
 Bava, Mario 6, 7 125, 126, 141, 152, 180, 215, 220 232, 236-238 244 249, 256, 257, 269, 271, 272, 289, 292 318 322 323, 332, 335, 336, 347 352-354, 360 361
 Baxendale, Leo 152
 Baxt, George 153
 Baxter, Les 32
Bay of Blood, A *see* *Twitch of the Death Nerve*
 Baye, Nathalie 174
 Bazin, André 135, 370
 Bean, Alexander 'Sawney' 80
 Beanie, Anne 95
 Béart, Emmanuelle 204-206
Beast in Heat, The 6, 8, 200-201, **203**
Beast The 221
Beatrice Cenci 279
 Beaumont, Charles 153
Beauty and the Beast *see* *Panna a Netvor*
Beauty Number 2 158 161
 Becker, Jacques 173
 Beckett, Samuel 107, 367
 Beckwith, Reginald 153
Beethoven's Nephew 156, 161, 165
 Beiderbecke Bix 139
 Beineix Jean-Jacques 193, 218
Bell of Hell The **76 184 185**, 201 202 **203**
 Bellatalia, Robert 98
belle captive, La 135
belle noiseuse, La 202, **203** 204-209
 Bells, Agostina 289
 Belling, Bob 254, **255**
Belly of an Architect, The 13
 Belmondo Jean-Paul 312 313
 Beltrame, Frank 335
Ben-Hur 144
 Benjamin, Walter 357
 Bennett, Heinz 62, 368
 Bennett, Alan 107
 Bennett, Charles 152
Benny's Video 242
 Benson, E.F. 151
 Berdela, Robert 225, 341
 Bergamini, Giovanni 252
 Berger, William 236
 Bergman, Ingmar 54, 71, 147, 251, 351, 368, 369
 Bergman, Ingrid 64, 210
 Bergonzelli, Sergio 253 254
 Beno, Luciano 99
 Berkeley, Xander **334**
Berlin Fever 240
 Bemaola, Carmelo 246
 Berli, Manna 290
 Bertolucci Bernardo 73, 294 296 302
 Berwick, Irvin 177
 Besson, Luc 193, 218
Betty Blue 193
Betty Boop 96
Beyond Good and Evil (book) 377, 381
Beyond Terror The Films of Lucia Fulci (book) 6, 8
Beyond the Darkness 6, 180 181
Beyond Therapy 249
Beyond The 6, 113, 126, 188, 336, 359
 Bianchi Andrea 7, 231, 236, 306
Bianco e Nero (book) 301
Bicycle Thieves, The 230
 Bidgood, James 313, 314
Big Joanna with the Long Thighs 236
Big Sleep, The 253
Bike Boy 26, 156
 Bilbao Fernando **228**
 Bilbow, Tony 107
Bitlis 270
 Binoche, Juliet 149
Bird with the Crystal Plumage The 85, 86, 215, 316, 332
Birds, Orphans and Fools 170, 172
 Bisera, O ga 293
Bitter Moon 27
Bitter Tears of Petra Von Kant The 343
 Bix 139
 Bjorkman, Tiina 278
Black Angel *see* *Venus in Furs*
Black Belly of the Tarantula 216
Black Cat, The 113
Black Cat, The (story) 106
Black Sabbath 125 289
Black Sunday **124**, 125, 126, 152, 215, 269, 270, 353, 360
 Blackwood, Algernon 151
Blade of the Ripper **191**, 209-210
 Blair, Janet 153
 Blair, Linda 306
 Blake, Nicholas 107
Blake's 7 (TV series) 120, 121
 Blanc, Enka 256, 287, 289, 317
Blanche 147
Blanchville Monster The 263
 Basetti, Mano 22
Blazing Magnum 263
Bleak Moments 227
Blind Date 254
Blind Dead, The (film series) 264, 266
 Boch Robert 107, 153
 Blond, Susan **194**, 198
Blonde in Love, A *see* *Lásky Jedné Plavovlásky*
 Bonksleiner Alexander 211
Blood and Black Lace 215, 237, 249, 257, 272
Blood Countess, The 240
Blood Delirium 210-211
Blood for Dracula **20**, 21, 22, **23**, **24**, 26, 27, **29**, 156, 159, 160 162-165
Blood from the Mummy's Tomb 33, 34
Bloody Moon 210, 272
 Bloomfield Mike 198
Blow Job 157, 159
Blow Up 85 86, 296, 303
Blue 96
Blue Eyes of the Broken Doll 246
Blue Movie 96
Blue Velvet 15, 259, 372
Bluebeard (book) 69
 Blunt, Giles 174
 Bochco Steven 258
 Bockris, Victor 199
 Bodnia, Kim 292
Body Double 85, 235
Body Snatchers 118
 Boetticher, Budd 318
 Bolkan, Florida 292 342
 Bolchini, Danilo 144
 Bond, Linda **50**
 Bonitzer, Pascal 204
Bonnie and Clyde 313
Boogeyman, The 75, 242
Bordelia 139, 365
Bons Godounov 149
 Bons, Sal *see* Baccaro, Salvatore
 Borkowski, Jacek 111
 Bornedal, Ole 292
 Borowczyk Waleńan 69, 147, 149, 221, 295, 367
 Bosch, Hieronymus 17
 Bose, Lucia 335
 Bosic, Andrea 360
bouche de Jean-Pierre, La 41
 Bouchet, Barbara 189, 190
 Bova, Raoul 139 142-144
 Bow Gamelan 95
 Bowie, David **10 52 55, 57, 59** 68, 69, 305
Boys from Brazil, The 351
 Bozzuffi Marcel 249, 250
 Bracardi, Giorgio 317
 Bracken, Susan **176**, 179
 Braddell Maunce 28, 29
Brain Damage 15, 193
Brainiac 125
 Brait, Carla 212
 Brakhage, Stan 8, 94, 103
Bram Stoker's Dracula 93
 Branagh, Kenneth 27
Branded to Kill 167
 Brando Marlon 81, 302
 Brandon Michael 86
 Braunek, Malgorzata **60** 147 149, 371, 379, 380
 Braunsberg, Andrew 21, 27
Brazil 18 218
Breaking the Waves 69
 Brecht, Berthold 94
 Bredehoft, Susanne 343
 Bredehoft, Suzanne 242
 Brenner, Joseph 180
 Brescia, Alfonso 332
 Bresson, Robert 319 370
 Breton, André 167 276, 319, 372
 Breton, Michele **186**
Bride of Frankenstein 34, 105 **106**
Brides of Dracula, The 151
 Brignone, Guido 360
 Brismée, Jean 287, 336
 Broccoli, Albert R. 80
 Brochard, Martine **185**, 233
Brood, The 8, 283
 Brooks, Louise 57
 Brooks Mel 105
Brothers Karamazov, The (book) 54
 Brothers Quay 257
 Brownngg S.F. 177-181
brut qui rend fou, Un 135

- Brus Gunter 352
 Bryntrup, Michae 96 97
 Brynych, Zbynek 109
 Bucci, Flavio 290 291
 Buchanan, Larry 177-179
Buildog Jack 80
Bullet for Pretty Boy, A 178
 Bundy, Ted 267
 Buñuel, Luis 42 85, 87, 192, 287 351, 352, 356
 Burman, Tom 239
Burn Witch Burn see Night of the Eagle
Burning, The 126
 Burns, Marilyn 242
 Burroughs, William Seward 97, 280 282 285, 310, 372
 Burwell Pau. 91, 95
Bus Conductor, The (story) 151
Butcher, Baker, Nightmare Maker 198
Butterfly of Night see Short Night of the Glass Dolls
 Buttgerit, Jörg 242

Cabina (silent) 360
 Cadinot, Jean Daniel 276
 Cafarel, José Maria 262
 Cage John 95
 Cain James 58
Caligula - The Untold Story 18
 Calle Jesús 262
 Calloway, Cab 91
Caliko 125, 152
 Calvo, Pepe 347
 Camanto Augusto 295
 Camminec, Pier A. 286
 Cammell, Donald 56 369
 Campbell, Alex 82
 Campbell, John W. 153
 Campbell, Ramsey 257
 Campogalliani, Carlo 360
 Camus, Albert 286
 Canale, Gianna Maria 360
 Canby, Vincent 75
 Canevan, Cesare 243 244
Cannibal Apocalypse 116 211-212
Cannibal Ferox 212
Cannibal Girls 80
Cannibal Holocaust 6, 126, 212 365
 Canovas, Anne 364
 Capolicchio, Lino 140, 248
 Caponi, Aldo 318
 Capote, Truman 286
Captive 53
 Carax Léos 193
Carla's Song 68
Came 41 47
 Cammeo, Giuliano 212, 213, 254
 Caro Marc 218, 257
 Carpenter John 7, 119, 122
 Carr, Camila 176 177 178
 Carreras, Michae 34, 35
Carné 253, 263 269
 Carstensen Margit 340 341, 343
Casanova 227
Case of the Bloody Ins, The 212-213
 Casini, Stefania 23 24 198
Cassandra Crossing, The 120
 Cassavetes, John 156
 Cassola, Carla 112
Casting the Runes (story) 151, 152
Castle of Blood 211, 212
Casualty (TV series) 257
Cat and the Canary, The 105
Cat in the Brain 107
Cat O'Nine Tails, The 85
Cat People 151
 Cavalcanti, Alberto 151
cavalieri che fecero l'impressa, I see Knights of the Quest
 Cavallone, Alberto 351
 Cavani, Liliana 243, 317
 Cavara Paolo 216 316
 Cecchi, Carlo 141
Ceiling 168
 Celeste, Nino 338, 353
Celine and Julie Go Boating 205
 Céline, Louis-Ferdinand 195, 312
Censored (book) 311
 Cepek, Petr 110
 Chabrol, Claude 173, 202, 296
 Chambers, Marilyn 118
 Chandler, Betty 176
 Chandler, Raymond 96
 Chaney, Hélène 360
 Chaney Jr., Lon 153 241
chant d'amour, Un 91, 96
Chaos Pervers 213-214
 Chaplin, Charlie 67
Charlie and His Two Chicks see Charlie et ses deux nœttes
Charlie et ses deux nœttes 224
château de cène, Le (book) 222
 Chaumette, François 275
Chelsea Girls, The 99, 156 158 159
 Chester, Hal E. 152
Chicago Hope (TV series) 257
chien Andalou, Un 42, 87, 356
chiens, Les 174
Chiesa, La see Church The
Chinatown 147
Chinese Roulette 291 341
chinoise, La 313
 Chopin, Frédéric François 67
 Christensen, Brigitte 210
 Christensen, Laura 258
 Christie, Agatha 141, 236
 Christie, Julie 174
 Christine, Katia 279
Christmas Present 139 365
Church, The 16, 17-19, 151
Chysanthemums for a Bunch of Swine 216
 Chytlova, Vera 108, 109, 111, 167, 168 170 172
Cinema Paradiso 143
 Cinquetti, Gigliola 139
 Cipriani Stelvio 318, 347
Circus of Horrors 153
City of the Living Dead 18, 113, 126
City of the Walking Dead see Nightmare City
 Clair, Jany 322
 Clark, Candy 59
 Clark, Ken 322 323
 Clarke, Larry 27
 Clarkson Grady T. 113-115
 Clemens, Brian 263
 Clémenti, Pierre 279
Cleopatra 144, 158
 Clerq Dimitri de 135
 Clery, Connee 316
Cling Film 96, 99, 103
Clockwork Orange, A 88
 Cobbing, Bob 95
 Cocleau, Jean 93, 130 256, 286
 Cohen, Larry 259, 264
 Coil 96
Cold Blooded Beast 203, 214-215
 Collins, Rufus 96
Color Me Blood Red 210
Colors 15
 Colucci, Mario 335, 336
 Columbus, Chns 187
Comeback, The 221
Comfort of Strangers, The 338
 Comi Ettore 112, 113-115
 Comino, Jo 95, 96
Comme la lune 224
 Conan Doyle, Arthur 87
Confessions of a Window Cleaner 244
Conjure Wife (book) 153
 Conrad, Beverly 92
 Conrad, Tony 92, 97
Contagious 117, 122
Contamination 121, 122 123, 317
Contempt see mepris, Le
 Contnello, Ubaldo 353
Conversation with a Cupboard Man see Rozmowa z człowiekiem z szafy
Cook, The Thief His Wife and Her Lover, The 233
Cookies see gallettes de Pont-Aven, Les
 Cooper, Dennis 227
 Cooper, George A. 245
 Cooper, Henry 245
 Cooper, Stan 335
 Coppola, Francis Ford 93
 Corbucci, Sergio 360
 Cord, Alex 231
 Corman, Roger 53, 80, 113
 Corra, Teodora 236
Corridor (short film) 193
 Corndon, Giovanni 144
 Corndon, Tobia 144
 Corndori, Tonino 144
 Corngan, Shirley 215, 216
corta notte delle bambole di vetro, La see Short Night of the Glass Dolls
 Costanzo, Maurizio 364
 Coster-Waldau, Nikolaj 292
 Costner Kevin 319
 Cottafavi, Vittorio 360
Couch 96
couleurs du diable, Les 174
Count Dracula's Great Love 245
 Cox, H.H. 222
 Cozzi, Luigi 113, 295, 316, 317
Cracked Actor (documentary) 55
Craft, The 152
Crash 149
 Craven, Wes 261 290, 291, 318, 341, 343
 Crawford, Joan 157
Crazies, The 120
Crazy Underwear see Mutande pazzo

- Cremator, The* *see* Spalovac Mrtvol
Crime de M. Lange, Le 323
Crimes of Passion 244
Crimes of the Black Cat, The 215-216 **219**
Crimes of the Future 96, 329
Crimson 246
Cripps, Steve 95
Crisanti, Gabriele 305
Crispino, Armando 231
Cristal, Perla 241
Critique of Dialectical Reason (book) 85
Cronaca di un amore 296
Cronenberg, David 6, 8, 19, 85, 88, 96, 107, 118, 149, 193, 211 252 280, 282-285 331
Cronos 82
Croupier 53
Cry Baby Killer 113
Cry of the Banshee 32
Crystal Gazing 297
Cucciolla, Riccardo 318
Cukor, George 158, 162
Cummins, Peggy 152
Cupisti, Barbara 17
Curse of the Demon *see* Night of the Demon
Curtiz, Michael 106
Cushing, Helen 33, 34
Cushing, Peter 34, 106
Cut-Ups, The 97, 310
Cyclope 217
Czechoslovak New Wave (book) 172

Daddy 227
Dahmer, Jeffrey 73, 225
Daily Mail, The (newspaper) 82
Daisies *see* Sedmikrásky
Daleka Costa 109
Daley, Richard Joseph (Mayor) 32
Dali, Fabienne 256
Dallesandro, Joe **23, 24, 28, 29 154** 160-165, 198
Daly, John 80
D'Amato, Joe 6, 7, 18 180 181 306 336, 338, 365
Damiani, Damiano 188 189 365
Dance of the Vampires 107
Dancing Paradise 141, 248
D'Angelo, Laura 290
Daniels, Harold 178
D'Annunzio, Gabriele 360
Dante 17
Dare, M.P. 152
Dargent, Mireille **321**
Dano Argento's World of Horror 17
Dark Alchemy The Films of Jan Svankmajer (book) 168
Darling 174
Darren, James 354, **355**, 356
Darwin, Charles 119
Dassin, Jules 244
Daughters of Darkness 278
Davies, Ray 79
Davis, Gerry 121
Dawn of the Dead 211
Dawson, David 94, 99
Day of the Beast 262
Day of the Dead 121
Day the Earth Caught Fire, The 244
Day Dons 210

de Bono, Edward 14
De Grassi, Gianfranco 290
de la Fuente, Félix Rodriguez 192
de la Mare, Walter 105
De Landa, Manuel 96
De Martino, Alberto 263
De Mejo, Carlo 343
De Palma, Brian 85, 233, 235, 253
De Rossi, Fernanda 254
De Rossi, Giannetto 211
De Sele, Lorraine 359
De Sica, Manuel 215
De Sica, Vittorio 165, 296
Dead and Bured 82
Dead of Night 151
Dead Ringers 264, 282 283, 329, 349
Dean, James 254, 305
Dearden, Basil 151
Death Bed 49, 50, 216-217
Death Laid an Egg 351
Death Line **78, 79-82, 83** 107
Death Moon 262
Death of Lovers, The (poem) 224
Death Trap 107
Death Trip (film series) 277
Dédales 187
Deep Red 85-88, 126, 180 257, 316
Dei, Gianni 305
Deleuze, Gilles 130
Dekalossen 218
Delitto 216
Delitto carnale 244
Delli, Charlie 178
Della Francesca, Piero 102
Delle Piane, Carlo 139, 140
Delli Colli, Franco 365
Dell'Orco, Alessandro 353
Delluc, Louis 168
Delon, Alain 174
Delorme, Guy 266
Demanty Noci 109
Demick, Anna 346
Demme, Jonathan 79 80
Demonia **112**, 113-115
Demons 17, 126, 269
Demons of the Mind 31-34, 218, **219** 220-221
Denham, Maunice 152
Deodato, Ruggero 5, 7, 17, 18, 126, 212 359, 365
Derzi, János 260
Desert Rose 95, 96
Desert, James *see* Vandewoestijne, Johan
Deserter and the Nomads The *see* Zbehovia a Putnici
Deserter, The 168, 169
deserto rosso, Il 296
Desperate Hours, The 318
Desperate Living 239, 242
Despins, Joseph 227, 229
deux crocodiles, Les 224
deux orphelines vampires, Les 261
Devil Bat, The 105
Devil, The *see* Diabol
Devil's Backbone, The 82
Devil's Nightmare, The 216, 287 336
Di Bel a, Fausto 353
Di Leo, Fernando 214

Di Nardo, Mario 236
Di Panico, Ranieri 143
Diabol **60** 61, 67, 147-148 367
Diabolically 362
Diabolik 238
Diamond Dance 240
Diamonds of the Night *see* Démanty Noci
Dick, Philip K. 106
Dionisi, Stefano 141
Dirty Harry 263
Diva 218
Divers, Jim 95 96
Divine 28
Doctor in the Nude *see* Shock Treatment
Doctor Who (TV series) 120, 121
dolce vita, La 286
Domitika (film segment) 169
Donovan, Paul 261
Don't Deliver Us from Evil 221 224
Don't Go in the House 6, 225-226 **228**, 268
Don't Look in the Basement 6, **176**, 177-179, 181
Don't Look Now 101, 338
Don't Open the Door **176**, 179-181
Don't Torture a Duckling 8
Doomwatch (TV series) 121
Doré, Gustav 17
Dostoevsky, Fyodor 54, 234, 235
Double Face 346 347
Douglas, Kirk 165
Dougnac, Marie-Laure 218
doulos, Le 43
Downey, Robert 167
Dr Goldfoot and the Girl Bombs 238
Dr Jekyll and the Wolfman 216, 241
Dr Jekyll y el hombre lobo *see* Dr Jekyll and the Wolfman
Dr Kidare (TV series) 257
Dr X 106
Dracula 33
Dracula (book) 117
Dracula, the Terror of the Living Dead 245
Dragonfly for Each Corpse, A 332
Dream Demon 221
Dresden Dynamo 92
Dreyer, Carl 323
Dreyfus, Jean-Claude 218
Dritter Killer, The 226
Drowning Pool, The 218
Dubek, Alexander 167
Ducieux, Louis 187
Dudley, Terence 121
Duenig, Carl **376**
Duffer 226-227, 229
Dufour, Bernard 204-206
Dulac, Edmund 93
Dumaresq, William 227, 229
Dumb Augustine, The *see* Dumme Augustine, Die
Dumme Augustine, Die 108, **111**
Dune 70
Dune (book) 13, 148
Dupont, Pierre *see* Queter, Hugues
Durant, Pascal 113-115
Duras, Marguerite 130
Durgnat, Raymond 356, 367, 372
Dutronc, Jacques 65, 272, **273**, 275
Dutroux, Mark 47

- Dvorák, Antonín 109
 Dyer, Richard 361
Dzieje Grzechu 69, 147
- E R (TV series)* 257
East of Eden 254
 Eastman, George *see* Montefiori, Luigi
 Eastwood, Clint 115
Eaux D'Artifice 98
Ebola Syndrome 121
 Echevarna, Gisela 348, **350**
*Eclipse The *see* eclipse, L*
eclipse, L' 295
 Eco, Umberto 296
 Edel, Alfred 242
Eden et après, L. 134, 135
Edgar Allan Poe's The Black Cat 113
 Edison, Thomas 119, 157
 Edmonds, Don 243
Edvard Munch 210, 296
 Edwards Blake 107
EFTC 99-102
 Effenberger, Vratslav 168
Effi Brest 73
 Eggar, Samantha 231
 Eissler, Kurt R. 94
El Topo 13-15, 54
Element of Crime, The 234, 257, 259
Elephant Man, The 15
 Eliot, T.S. 227
 Elliott, Denholm **30**
 Elison, Harlan 125
 Elison, Joseph 225, 226, 268
 Elphick, Michael 259
Emergency Ward Ten (TV series) 257
Empire 157, 159, 197
En toute innocence 174
Enchantment of the Blue Sailors, The 240
Encyclopedia of Fantasy, The (book) 152
 Endfield, Cy 152
 Endore, Guy 118
Engine Trouble 268
 Eno, Brian 330
Entertaining Mr Sloane 200
 Epenes, Károly 260, 261
Epidemic 122, 257
Epileptic Seizure Comparison 92
 Epstein, Jean 168
Eraserhead 15, 42, 107, 218, 227, 259
Eros Erosion 96, 98
*Erotic Blue *see* Case of the Bloody Ins, The*
Erotic Rites of Frankenstein, The **228**, 229-230
 Escher, M.C. 380
 Escourrou, Emmanuelle 193
 Esper, Dwain 106
 Essex, Harry 254
Etruscan Kills Again, The 231
Eureka 53-55
Europa 69, 257
 Evans, Centh Wyn 99
Everyone Deceased Except for the Dead 140, 248
Evil Dead 2 15
Evil Dead, The 189
Evil Dead, The (film series) 107
Evil Eye, The 152, 332
Evil Friendship, The (book) 222
- Excellent Cadavers* 336
Excesse de Sade 213, 214, 231-232
*Excite Me *see* Gently Before She Dies*
Existenz 107
*Exorcism *see* Exorcismes et messes noires*
Exorcismes et messes noires 326
Exorcist, The 34, 85, 153, 188, 261
Exterminating Angel, The 351
Eyeball **185** 232-233, 260
Eyes of Laura Mars, The 263
Eyewitness 79
- Face the Music* 244
Face/Off 245
Fahrenheit 451 174
Fairies, The (poem) 177
 Fall, The 280
 Fallenstein, Kanna 242
Fando Y Lis 13
 Fanni Tutti Cossey 98
Far from Heaven 330
 Farbrother, Pamela 32
 Farrar, Robert 179, 180
 Farrer, Steve 92, 93, 96
 Farrow, Tisa 263
 Fassbinder, Rainer Werner 73-75, 97, 242, 291, 340, 341, 343, 349
 Faulkner, William 286
 Fazio, Dino 335
 Feagin, Hugh 177, 178
Fear Eats the Soul 340
 Fellini, Federico 87, 108, 111, 140, 227, 248, 286, 294, 296
Fellini-Satyncon 230
Female Trouble 308
femme publique, La 68, 233-236, 275, 370, 372
 Fenech, Edwige 209, 210, 212, 213, 236, 353
 Ferrara, Abel 193
 Ferroni, Giorgio 289
 Ferry, Bryan 330, 342
Festa di laurea 365
 Fidani, Demofilo 323
fidélité La 275
 Fields, Gracie 227
Fieras sin jaula 192
Films and Filming (magazine) 35, 125
 Finan's Rainbow 114
Finnegan's Chin 93
 Fiser, Lubos 111
Fisher King, The 67
Fistful of Dollars, A 322
 Fitzgerald, Geraldine 263, 264
Five Dolls for an August Moon 236-237, 244
Five Easy Pieces 297
Flaming Creatures 91, 96
Flavia the Heretic 339, 342
 Fleischer, Max 91
 Flemming, Robert 125
Flesh 22, 26, 28, 29, 155, 156, 159-162, 198
Flesh and Blood 198
Flesh Film 96
Flesh for Frankenstein 21, 22, 27, 156, 159-165, 174
Flicker, The 92, 97
 Floersheim, Patrick 187
 Florence, Bruno de 91
Flower of My Secret, The 351
- Flowers for Algernon (book)* 106
Flowers of Evil, The (book) 223, 311
Fog, The 122
 Fonseca, Anthony J. 105
 Ford, John 126
 Forman, Milos 109, 147, 168
 Forqué, José Maria 253
 Forth, Jane **154**, 162
Fortunes of War, The 27
Forty-Duce 155, 156, 165
 Fossey Brigitte 187
 Foster Jeannette H. 222
 Foucault, Michel 7, 276
Four Flies on Grey Velvet 86, 316
Four Screenplays (book) 303
Four Times That Night 236, 237-238
 Fox, James **186** 307, 308
 Foxe, Cynnda 198
 Fraile, Francisco 347
 Franciosa, Anthony 86
 Francis, Pietro 360
 Franco, Jess 7, 130, 192, 213, 218, 221, 229, 230, 244, 262, 264, 266, 267, 272, 277, 286, 287, 295, 319, 326-328, 336, 354, 356, 357
 Franju, Georges 193
Frankenstein (1910) 119
Frankenstein (1931) 105, 119
Frankenstein (book) 119
Frankenstein '90 174
Frankenstein and the Monster from Hell 221
Frankenstein Unbound 113
 Frankin, Richard 305
 Franko, B. 96
 Frayling, Christopher 117, 339
Freak Orlando 238-240
Freaks 125
 Freda, Riccardo 7, 114, 125, 141, 152, 210, 269, 293, 335, 336, 344, 346, 347, 348, 360, 361
Freezer **36**, 37-39
 Fremont, Vincent 197, 198
Frenzy 294
 Freud, Sigmund 66, 70, 286, 347, 377, 379, 381
 Fnbo, Louise 259
 Fnedkun, William 85, 188
Fnghtmare 221
fnsson des vampires, Le 319
*Frog King, The *see* Froschkönig*
From A to B and Back Again (book) 195, 199
From Dusk Till Dawn Hangman's Daughter 143
Froschkönig 108
*Fruit of Paradise, The *see* Ovoce Stranu Rajskeho Jime*
 Fukasaku, Kintji 122
 Fuks, Ladislav 109
 Fuksiewicz, Jacek 147
 Fulcanelli 141
 Fulci, Camila 113, 115
 Fulci, Lucio 6-8, 17, 18, 85, 107, 112, 113-115, 126, 188, 211, 232, 253, 279, 292, 332, 336, 353, 359, 362, 364
 Fuller, Samuel 272, 313
 Fulton, Jessie Lee 178
Funeral in Berlin 351
*fun del hombre lobo, La *see* Fury of the Wolfman*
 Furlong, Edward 139, 141-143
 Fürstenberg, Ira 236
Fury of the Wolfman 240-241, 262

- Gacy, John Wayne 341
 Gadé, Analía 253
galettes de Pont-Aven Les 224
 Gall, Justine 236
 Gallant, Bob 48
 Gallant, Chns 8
 Garboli, Cesare 352
Garden, The 93
 Garko, Gianni 288, 289
 Gams, Mike 121
 Garone, Sergio 243
Gaslight 209
 Gastaldi, Ernesto 212
 Geldzahler, Henry 158
 Genberg, Mia 335
General Hospital (TV series) 115
 Genet, Jean 91, 93, 96, 276 313
Gently Before She Dies 213
German Chainsaw Massacre, The 242, 343
 German Alexei 108
Germicide 117
 Gershwin, George 92
Gestapo's Last Orgy, The 8, 243-244
Get Carter 245
Getaway, The 318
Ghost, The 346, 347, 361
Ghosthouse 270
 Giacomelli, Alberto 204
 Giagni, Gianfranco 336, 338
Giallo a Venezia 305
Giant Claw, The 107
 Gidel, Peter 94, 100
 Giles, Jane 97
 Gilliam, Terry 18, 32, 67, 121
 Ginsberg, Alan 282
 Giombini, Marcello 260
 Jordan, Aldo 189
 Giordano, Daniela 237
 Giordano, Manangela 7, 304 305, 306
 Giorgi, Eleanora 86
 Girolami, Manno 200
gudric, I see Excellent Cadavers
Glissements progressifs du plaisir 129, 134
God Told Me To 259
 Godard, Jean-Luc 6, 85, 86, 148, 173, 193, 202, 233, 235, 277, 286, 287, 291, 296, 301, 308, 310, 312, 313, 343, 370, 372, 377, 379
 Godsell, Vanda 245
 Godwin Frank 33
 Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von 65, 190 286
 Gogo, Nikolai 270
Goke - Body Snatcher from Hell 118
Goliath and the Vampires 216, 360
 Gordon, Colin 153
 Gordon, Douglas 98
Gospel According to St. Matthew, The 140
 Gothard, Michael 35
 Goupi, Jeanne 222
 Goya Francisco 17
 Gråbøl, Sofie 292
 Granger, Farley 189, 190, 332, 333, 335
 Granger, Stewart 295
Granny's Is 90, 101, 102
 Grant, Arthur 245
 Grant, Cary 64, 86
Grapes of Death *see* *raisins de la mort, Les*
 Grau, Jorge 342
Graveyard Disturbance 270
Green Man, The (book) 152
Greenaway Peter 8, 13, 233, 234
 Grelkowska, Manuela 149 150
grdo, Il 131, 296
 Griffith, D W 157
 Grimaldi, Dan 226
 Grin, Aleksandr 110
 Grotowski, Jerzy 66, 147, 149, 370
Grownups 106
 Grzegorzek Marusz 324
Guardian, The (newspaper) 82
Gucia (short film) 362
 Guenn-Hill Claudio 202
guerre est finie, La 57
 Guerrea, Bianca 15
 Guemlore, Monica 365
 Guest, Val 244, 245
 Guettard, Nicole 327
 Guillem, Sylvie 57
Gunman in Town 213
 Gurney, Sharon 81, 83
 Gurr, Tom 222
 Gutenberg, Johannes 49
 Gwynne, Anne 153
 Gysin, Brion 282
 Haarmann, Fntz 73-75, 340
 Hackett, Pat 198
 Hadzihalilovic, Lucile 40, 41
 Hafennichter, Oswald 32
 Hagen, Nina 240
 Haggard, Rider 34
haine La 43
Hall of the Lost Souls 168
Halloween 107, 225
 Halsey, Brett 113, 115, 237
 Hamer, Robert 151
 Harnes, Peter 109, 110, 168, 172
 Hamilton, David 135, 270
 Hamilton, John 335
 Hancock, Tony 95, 107
 Haneke, Michael 242
 Hansen, Holger Juul 258
 Hanuszkiewicz Adam 147
 Hardy, Robert 219
Harlow 198
 Harrel, Jim 176 179
 Harns, Richard 120
 Harmsen, Cathryn 251
 Harmsen Jim 71
 Hartley Hal 156
 Harvey, Michael 177
 Hasselhoff, David 306
Hatchet Murders, The *see* *Deep Red*
 Hauer, Rutger 53
Haunted Manor, The (opera) 150
Haunting, The 152
 Havlicek, Jaroslav 110
 Hay Wil 244
 Hayers, Sidney 153
 Haynes, Todd 328-330
Haytato 75
Heat 22, 29, 155 156 160-163, 198
 Heatherly, May 211
Heavenly Creatures 222
 Hedren, Tippi 84
 Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich 200, 286, 370, 372, 373
 Heim, Professor Albert 121, 123
Hell Drivers 152 245
Hell is a City 244-245
Hellraiser 15, 221
Hellraiser 2: Hellbound 15
Helping Relationship (documentary) 79
 Hemmings, Dawd 85, 86, 296
 Henerlotter, Frank 193
Henry Geldzahler 158
Henry Portrait of a Senal Killer 42
 Hepburn, Audrey 210
 Hepburn Kathenne 210
Herbert West Reanimator (story) 107
 Herbert, Frank 13, 148
 Herbert, James 211
Hercules (1957) 360
Hercules (1983) 317
Hercules Conquers Atlantis 380
Hercules in the Haunted World 360, 361
Hercules Vs. the Giant Warriors 263
Hercules, Prisoner of Evil 360
 Herrmann, Bernard 32, 356
 Herz, Juraj 108-111
 Herzog Werner 69, 295
 Hessler, Gordon 31, 32
 Heston Charlton 118
High Heels 351
Highlander (TV series) 187
 Highsmith Patricia 279
Hill Street Blues (TV series) 258
 Hills, Gilhan 219
 Hinton, George 209, 210, 212, 213, 264
 Hindley, Myra 224
 Hinz, Michael 237
 Hiroyuki, Oki 97
 Hirst, Damian 98
histoire d'O, L' (book) 129
 Hitchcock, Alfred 15, 32, 53, 65, 85-87, 98, 152 215, 279, 286 294 296, 318, 332
 Hooges, Mike 53
 Hoffman, Dustin 162
 Holden, Bill 262
 Holdem Michael 151
 Holland, Agnieszka 148
Hollywood the Haunted House (book) 53
Holocaust 2000 263, 264
 Holotik Rosie 176, 177
 Holt, Seth 32-34
Holy Mountain, The 13, 239
hombre que vino del ummo, El 241
Home Alone 27, 187
 Homer 87
Homicide: Life on the Streets (TV series) 258
Homme Fatal (book) 53, 56-58
homme qui ment, L' 134, 167
Honeymoon Killers, The 47
Hooked on Horror: A Guide to Reading Interests in Horror Fiction (book) 105
 Hooper, Tobe 67 107, 242
 Hoover, J. Edgar 73
 Hopkins, Anthony 141
 Hopper, Dennis 15

- Hordern Michael 220
Horror of Snape Island *see* *Tower of Evil*
Horror Rises from the Tomb 245-246 **247**
Horror: The Hundred Best Books (book) 125
Hot Zone, The (book) 121
Hound of the Baskervilles, The 156
House by the Cemetery, The 188
House of Mortal Sin 221
House of Whipcord 221
House on the Edge of the Park 126
House with Laughing Windows, The 17, 139-141
 144, 246, 248-249 269 364 365
 Houts Marshall 53
 Hoven Adnan 285
Howling, The 262
 Hrabal, Bohumil 108 109
 Hughes, Fred 197 198
 Hughes, John 27 187
 Hulme Juliet 222-224
Humanoid, The 331
Hunchback of the Morgue The 14, 245
Hunters in the Orchid, The (script) 149
 Huster, Francis 234
Hustler White 97
 Hylsmans J.K. 310, 311

I Am Legend (book) 117
I Spit on Your Grave 226
I Stand Alone *see* *Seul Contre Tous*
I Was a Teenage Zabbadoing 277, 278
I, a Man 156
 Ibsen, Henrik 87
Ich Tank 96, 99 102
 Identical 95, 96
Iguana with a Tongue of Fire 344 347
Il bacio 269
Il consigliere 263
Ilse, She Wolf of the SS 243, 244
 Ilyenko, Yun 167
Image of Donan Gray in the Yellow Press, The 240
Images 181, **247**, 249-252, 329
Imagining October 96
Immoral Tales 221
immortelle L' 133 134
important c'est d'aimer, L' 69, 148, 233, 367, 370, 372
In Camera (book) 195
In Quest of Meat Joy 96
In Search of Unicorns (book) 250
In the Eye of the Hurricane 252-253
In the Folds of the Flesh 253 254
 Incontrera Annabella 212, 213, 216
Inexperienced Ghost, The (story) 151
Inferno 85-88 **89**, 113, 126, 230, 257, 269, 336 356
Inferno (book) 17
Instantanées (short stories) 131
InterView (magazine) 28
Invasion of the Body Snatchers 118
 Ionesco, Eva 270
 Irons, Jeremy 264
Irreversible 9, 41 47
 Isanta, Eva 262
 Isbert, Tony 346
Island of Death 254 255
Island of Death *see* *Would You Kill a Child?*
Itch Scratch Itch Cycle, The 96
It's Alive 258

 Jackson, Michael 235
 Jackson, Peter 107 222
 Jagger Mick **186** 307-309
Jayka (short film) 362
 Jakubisko, Juraj 109 111 167-170, **171**, 172
Jealousie La (book) 129, 135
 James, M.R. 151, 152, 269
 James, William 370
 Jancsó Nyika 261
 Jansco, Miklos 167
 Janzurová, Iva 110
 Järegård, Ernst Hugo 258
 Jarman, Derek 93, 94, 96, 98, 313, 356
 Jarry, Alfred 167, 367
Jazz Band 248
 Jenkins, Billy 98
 Jenkins, Joseph 293
 Jenkinson, Philip 107
Jencho Fever 122
Jessie and Morgiana (story) 110
 Jessua, Alain 173-174, 330, 331
jeu avec le feu, Le 135
Jeu de massacre 173-174
 Jeunet, Jean-Pierre 218, 257
 Jires, Jarmol 108, 167, 168
 Jodorowsky, Adan **12**
 Jodorowsky, Alejandro 6, 13-15, 54, 167, 235, 239
 Jodorowsky Axel 15
 Joffe Roland 113
Johanna D'Arc of Mongolia 240
Johnny Guitar 157
 Johnson, Jed 26, 29, 197, 198, 200
 Johnson, Robert 295
 Johnston, Margaret 153
 Jones, Cern 80
 Jones, Stuart 95
 Josephs, Wilfred 32
 Jourdan, Catherine 134
Journey to the End of the Night (book) 195
 Joyce, James 87, 227
 Juerjing, Amo 22, **29**, 162
Julius Caesar (play) 54
 Jung, Carl Gustav 66, 369, 373 381
Justine 327

Kabaret metafizyczny (book) 149
 Kádár, Ján 109
Kanal 147
 Karer, Jay 80, 81
 Kantor, Tadeusz 147
 Kaprisky, Valene 68 233-235
 Kanna, Anna 312 313
 Karioff Bons 125
 Karner, Brigitte 260
 Kaufman Christine 33
 Kaurismäki Aki 279
 Kawalerowicz, Jerzy 149
 Kazan, Elia 119
 Keaton, Buster 67
 Keaton, Camile 346, 347
 Kedzercawska Dorota 362, 364
Keep My Grave Open 180-181
 Kerr, Andrew 34
 Keith, Sheila 153
 Kendall, Bobby 313, 314, **315**
 Kendall, Suzy 339

 Kendal, Tony **184**, 264, **265**
 Kern, Peter 343
 Kern, Richard 277
 Kerova, Zora 343
 Kerr, Ian 92, 95, 96
 Kerr, M.E. 222
 Kes 68
Khrustalev, Mashin! 108
Khrustalev, My Carl *see* *Khrustalev, Mashin!*
Kids 27
 Kier, Udo **20**, 22, **24**, 27 **29** 162 **164**, 165, 240,
 242, 258, 343
 Kierkegaard, Søren 272
Kill, Baby Kill! 256-257, 353
Killer Barbys 261 262
Killing Mom 278
King of Marvin Gardens, The 297
King Solomon's Mines (book) 34
 King Perry 29, 198
 King Stephen 121, 294, 351
 King, Tony 211
Kingdom The 69 **185** 257 259
 Kinks, The 79
Kino (book) 147
 Kinokaze 98
 Kinski Debora 271
 Kinski, Klaus 69 214, 295, 346, 354 **355**, 356
 Kinski, Nastassja **30** 69
Kiss 157 159
 Klein Alan 13
 Klein Calvin 29
 Klein, T.E.D. 153
 Klimovsky, Leon 192, 332
 Klos, Elmar 109
Knife in the Water *see* *Noz w Wodzie*
Knife of Ice **184**, 192, 259-260, **265**
 Knight, Esmond 259
Knights of the Quest 139, 141-144, 269
 Koch, Stephen 25
 Kolkowski, Alex 98
Kolya 67
Koniek Swiata (short film) 362
 Korzynski, Andrzej 272
 Koscina, Sylva 215, 216, 333
 Kötting, Andrew 96
 Kozuchowska, Malgorzata 111
 Kramer Stanley 53
 Kreischmann, Thomas 139, 144
 Kristel, Sylvia 135
 Krumbachová, Ester 109
 Kruschev, Nikita 167
 Kubelka, Peter 92, 98
 Kuback Stanley 42, 250, 295
 Kucera, Jaroslav 108
 Kuhn, Annette 94
Kulhavy Dábel 108
 Kundera, Milan 109, 110
 Kurosawa Akira 238, 250
 Kutz, Kazimierz 167

 Lacan Jacques 86 87 309 358 369, 377
 Lacey Catherine 153
 Lachman, Edward 330
 Ladd Jr Alan 80, 81
 Ladd, David 81
 Lado Aldo 290-292, 331, 332 342 343

- Laganga, Mansa 323
 Lahire, Sandra 96
 Lai, Me Me 259
 Lanchester, Elsa **106**
Land without Bread 42
 Lander, Lea 318
 Landi, Mario 305, 306
 Lanfranchi, Mario 269
 Lang Fritz 58, 75, 117, 261, 287
 Lange, Jessica 27
 Langenfeld, Sarah 263
 Larcher, David 8, 9, 93, 96, 99-103, 357, 358
Ľásky Jedné Plavovlásky 147, 168
Last Exit to Brooklyn (book) 195
Last House on Dead End Street 6
Last House on the Left, The 290 291, 318, 341 343
Last Man on Earth, The 118
Last Minute 143, 248, 365
Last Movie, The 15
Last Page, The 244
Last Samurai, The 53
Last Tango in Paris 302
Last Trick of Mr Schwarzwald and Mr Edgar, The
see Poslední Trk Pana Schwarzwalda a Pana
 Edgara
Last Year at Marienbad 8, 56, 87, **128**, 130-133, **137**,
 234, 287, 306, 369
 Laughton, Charles 105
 Laura 270
 Laurent, Jacqueline 266
Laurin 260-261
 Lautreumont, Comte de 223
 Lavagnino, Angelo Francesco 335
 Lavin, Gabriele 85, 141, 364 365
Law of Desire 271
 Law, John Phillip 210, 293
 Lawrence, Max 256
 Le Fanu, Sheridan 105, 151
 Leduc, Violette 223
 Lee, Christopher 14, 21, **30**, 35, 80, 81, 360
 Lee Margaret 354 **355**, 357
 Lee Spike 156
Legend of Bo Diddley, The (documentary) 79
Legends of the Fall 71
 LeGnee, Malcolm 93, 100
 Leiber Fritz 153
 Leigh, Mike 106, 200, 227
 Leister, David 96 98
 Len, Jeanette *see* Lenzi, Giovanna
 Leni Paul 105
 Lenica, Jay 69, 149, 367
 Lenin, Vladimir 172
 Lennon, John 97
 Lenzi, Giovanna 215, 216
 Lenzi Umberto 6, 7, 192, 198 211, 212, 216, 232,
 233, 252, 259, 260, 332 359
León la lune 173
 Leonardi, Marco 139, 143, 144
Leonardo's Diary 168
 Leone, Sergio 144
 Leonviola, Antonio 360
 Lethen, Al 318
 Levin, Ira 330
Lévrés de sang 320
 Levy, Daniela 243, 244
 Lewis, H G 178, 210
 Lewis, Wyndham 21, 283
 Lewton, Vai 151-153, 335, 364
Lexx The Dark Zone (TV mini-series) 261
Liberation (newspaper) 61
 Libert, Anne **228**, 230
Lick an Apple Like a Pussy The Movie Stanislawski
Never Made 278
 Liehm, Antonin 167
Life and Death of Andy Warhol, The (book) 199
Life II (book) see Zivot II (book)
Life on the Edge 218, 239
Light Music 91, 92
 Ligotti Thomas 257
Like Water for Chocolate 143
Limping Devil, The see Kulhavý Dábel
 Jinares, Sebastián Palomo 192
 Linda, Bogusław 149
 Lindfors, Viveca 201
 Liné, Hege **184**, 264
Link. The 263-264
Lisa and the Devil 237, 256, 347
 Liska, Zdenek 109, 111
Little Fly (story) 110
Living Dead at the Manchester Morgue, The 118, 342
Lizard in a Woman's Skin, A 8
 Loach, Ken 68, 106
 Loacon & Sons 240
 Loeb, Martin 270
 Logan, Andrew 313
 Logar, Juan 192
Lolita 270
 Lom, Herbert 241
 Lommel Ulli 73-75, 242, 340, 341
Lonesome Cowboys 26, 156, 157, 159 160 163
Long Goodbye, The 249
Long Hair of Death, The 18, 211
Long Journey, The see Dalekà Cesta
Look Who's Talking 193
Lorelei's Grasp, The **184**, 264, **265** 266
Lorna the Exorcist 266-267
 Lorrain, Jean 311
 Lorre Peter 75
 Losey Joseph 53
Lost Hearts (story) 151
Lost Highway 70, 369, 379
 Loud, Marc 243, 244
Love at Twenty see *Amour à Vingt Ans, L*
Love is My Profession 33
Love, Jealousy and Revenge 96
 Lovecraft, H P 107, 152, 153, 379
 Lovelock Ray 292, 342
Loves of Ondine 156
 Loyola, Javier 262
 Lucas, George 331
 Lucas, Jorge R 262
Lucker 267-268
 Lugosi, Bela 105, 106
 Luján, Veronica 241
 Lulli, Piero 256
 Lumière, Louis 157, 305
 Luna, Bigas 264
Luna, La 294
Lupa, La 143
 Lustig, William 225, 268
Lyantropus The Moonlight Murders 261-262
 Lydon, John 237
 Lynch, David 13, 15, 70, 106 107 227, 257, 259
 369 379
 Lyne, Adrian 58, 270
 Lynskey, Melanie 222
 M 75, 261
*M*A*S*H* 249
Ma and Pa Kettle (film series) 115
Mecabre 126, 141, 181, 268 269, **274**, 353
 MacAdams, Anne *see* Weenick, Annabelle
 MacAdams Rhea **176**, 177, 179
 MacGinnis, Niall 152
 Machen Arthur 151
Maciste all'Inferno (silent) 360
Maciste the Mighty 360
Mad Butcher The 80
Mad Death, The 117
Madame De. 173
Madame Edwarda (book) 69, 370, 373
Madame Wang's 156, 165
Madame X - An Absolute Ruler 240
 Maddin, Guy 257
 Madonna 143
Mafia Kid, The see Spike of Bensonhurst
 Magail, Macha 200 201
 Magee, Patrick **219**, 220
Magic Bow, The 295
 Magner, Jack **182** 188, **191**
Magnificat 139 141
 Magritte, René 135, 302
 Maguire, Alex 98
 Mahen, Jin 109
maison de rendez-vous, La (book) 129 134 135
 Matland Carter, Kathleen 98
 Majewski, Janusz 352
Maladolescenza 270
 Malanga, Gerard 96
 Malcolm, Derek 82
Maidoror (book) 223
 Malfatti Manna 289
Malizia 317
 Male, Louis 270, 279
 Maleson, Miles 106
 Maluenda, Luis 262
Men Who Fell to Earth, The **10**, **52**, 53, 55, 56 **57**,
58
Man Who Lies, The see *homme qui ment, L*
Man with a Movie Camera 370
 Mancini, Carla 212
 Mancon, Guglielmo 215
 Manera, Jessica Franco 278
Maniac (1934) 106
Maniac (1980) 225, 226, 268
 Mann, Manfred 356
 Manson, Marilyn 352
 Manzor, René 187
mar, El 351
 Maranzana, Mano 353
marca del hombre lobo, La 241
 Marceau, Sophie 272 **273** 275
 Marciano, Francesca 248
 Marencin Albert 167, 168
Mare's Tail 8 99
 Margheriti, Antonio 18, 21, 22, 211, 212, 360
Marie, the Doll see *Marie-poupée*
Marie-poupée 224

- Marigny, Alfred de 53
 Marley, John 231
 Marmie 294
 Marriages 365
 Married Woman, A 291
 Marsiliach, Constina 86, 88, 235
 Martinez, Nacho 272
 Martino, Sergio 209, 210, 213, 216, 236
 Marx, Karl 71, 313
 Mary Shelley's Frankenstein 27
 maschera del demonio, La (1960) *see* Black Sunday
 maschera del demonio, La (1990) 270-271
 Mask of Satan, The *see* Black Sunday
 Maslansky, Pau 80, 82
 Massey, Edith 28
 Massi, Stelvio 213
 Mastorakis, Nico 254, 255
 Mastrolanni, Marcello 131
 Matador 271-272
 Matheson, Richard 117, 153
 Mathews, Tom Dewe 311
 Mattei Bruno 6, 212, 338, 361, 362
 Matter of Life or Death?, A 93
 Matthee, Jean 91, 96
 Maupassant, Guy de 110
 Maura, Carmen 271
 May, Marta 233
 Mayersberg, Paul 53-58
 Mazere, Michael 95, 96
 McCabe and Mrs Miller 249
 McCambidge Mercedes 158
 McCloskey, Leigh 86, 87, 356
 McEwan, Ian 324
 McGhee, William Bill 177
 McGoonan, Patrick 280, 331
 McGregor, Charles 198
 McGuire, Dorothy 210
 McKellen, Ian 351
 McKendry, Maxime 162, 164
 McKenna, David 198
 McKenna, Virginia 264
 McKinnon, Angus 8
 McNair, Barbara 354
 McNamara, William 84
 Meaker, Manjane *see* Packer, Vin
 Medico, Ron 50
 Medicott, Dr Reginald 222
 Meisner, Günter 348, 350, 351
 Mekas, Jonas 97, 156
 Melato, Manange a 140
 Mele, Dino 189
 Meliès, Georges 361
 Meloni, Edith 236
 Melville, Jean-Pierre 43, 53
 mémés cannibales, Les *see* Rabid Grannies
 Mendoza, Alberto de 209, 210
 Menzel, Jiri 108-110
 mepns, Le 313, 370
 Merhar, Stanislas 139, 143
 Meril, Macha 290, 291
 Menmee, Prosper 352, 353
 Merritt, A. 153
 Merry Christmas Mr Lawrence 53
 Merta, Zdenek 111
 Mes nuits sont plus belles que vos jours 65, 272, 273, 275, 371, 372
 Meter, Barbara 97
 Metz, Christian 369
 Miami Golem 263
 Michelangelo (TV mini-series) 113
 Michelet, Jules 134
 Midnight Cowboy 162, 163
 Midnight Lace 209
 Miles, Sylvia 161-163
 Milford, Penelope 263
 Milian, Tomas 279
 Mili of the Stone Women 289
 Milais, Hugh 250
 Millennial Bee, The 170, 172
 Miller, Henry 286
 Miller, Jonathan 125, 151
 Milligan, Andy 178, 227, 239, 333
 Minervini, Gianni 140
 minets sauvage, Les 276
 Mingus, Charlie 286
 Mira, Brigitte 341
 Miracle, Irene 86, 88, 89, 290, 317
 Miraculous Virgin, The 168
 Miron, Helen 233
 Mishima, Yukio 373
 Mishkin, William 333
 Mitchell, Cameron 263, 264
 Mitchell, Eddy 174
 Mitchell, Gavin 96
 Mitchell, Gordon 210, 211
 Mitchell, Warren 245
 Mixed Blood 25, 156, 161, 162, 165
 Mizer, Bob 314
 Molina, Jacinto *see* Naschy, Paul
 Molnar, Stanko 269
 Mondo Carne 15, 342, 359
 Mondo Mad 277
 Mondo Pazzo 339
 Mondo Weirdo 2, The Luxury of Love 278
 Mondo Weirdo, A Trip to Paranoia Paradise 277-278
 Moniuszko, Stanislaw 150
 Monkey's Birthday 96, 99, 101
 Monster, The 105
 Montefiori, Luigi 318, 344, 365
 Montero, Roberto 332, 333
 Moon Child 351
 Moon of the Wolf 262
 Moon Trilogy (book series) 148
 Moonlight Sonata, The 278-279
 Moore, Anthony 100
 Moore, Julianne 334
 Moore, Norma 178
 Moreau, Jeanne 131
 Morgan, Ted 282
 Morghen, John 211
 Morgiana 108, 110, 111
 Moriarty, Michael 263, 264
 Monnette, Bruce 132
 Morley, Paul 8
 Morowitz, Harold J. 372
 Mormcone, Ennio 213, 233, 263, 292, 332
 Morns, Kirk 360, 361
 Mornson, Jim 308
 Mornsey, Paul 6, 21, 22, 25-29, 86, 155-165, 197-199
 Mortimer, John 31
 Mortimer, Penelope 31
 Mother's Day 278
 Mucha, Alphonse 110
 Müller, Matthias 96, 97
 Muvehill, Chuck 298, 304
 Muvey, Laura 297
 Muñoz, Amparo 262
 Murder by Design 279
 Murder Obsession 293, 346, 347
 Murderer Must Kill Again, The 317
 Murders in the Rue Morgue 32, 33
 Murgia, Pier Giuseppe 270
 Murnau, F.W. 58
 Murphy, Eddie 106
 Musante, Tony 86
 Mussolini, Benito 269
 Musy, Alain 187
 Mutande pazzo 143
 Muti, Ornella 113
 My Fair Lady 158
 My Hustler 156, 158, 159, 161
 My Last Breath (book) 87
 My zdes emigranty (book) 149
 Mygind, Peter 258
 Mysterious Island 152
 N'apns les dés 134
 Na Srebnyim Globie 61, 146, 148, 367, 372, 373
 Na Srebnyim Globie (book) 148
 Nabokov, Vladimir 270
 Nahon, Philippe 43
 Naked 200
 Naked City, The 244
 Naked Lunch 6, 279-280, 281, 282-285
 Naked Lunch, The (book) 280, 282-284
 Nance, Jack 305
 Napoli Violenta 232
 Nanzzano, Silvio 351
 Naschy, Paul 14, 125, 126, 240, 241, 245, 246, 247, 262, 326
 Nashville 249, 251
 Nation, Terry 120
 nausée, La (book) 129
 Near Dark 126
 Nebraska il pistolero 323
 Necronomicon 130, 285-287, 327
 Neeson, Liam 27
 Neill, Sam 62, 368, 369, 375, 376, 381
 Nekromantik 42, 242
 Nemeč, Jan 108, 109, 111
 Nen, Rosalba 189, 190, 214
 Nestor Burma (TV series) 224
 Nettoyage a sec 143
 New York Ripper, The 6, 113
 New York Times, The (newspaper) 62, 75
 Newman, Kim 82
 Newman, Paul 254
 Newton, Helmut 58
 Next! *see* Blade of the Ripper
 Nezval, Vitezslav 109
 Nezval, Vratislav 168
 Nichols, Mike 173
 Nicholson, Annabel 93, 95
 Nicholson, Jack 297, 298, 304
 Nicolai, Bruno 213, 233
 Nicolodi, Dana 86, 294, 352, 353
 Nielsen, Dennis 225

- Nieto, Ángel 192
 Nietzsche, Friedrich 13, 243, 286, 301, 308, 368
 373, 377, 381
Night and Fog 130
Night Evelyn Came Out of the Grave The 287 289
Night Hair Child 82
Night of the Bloody Apes 125
Night of the Damned, The 336
Night of the Demon 151-153
Night of the Devils 216, 288, 289
Night of the Eagle 153
Night of the Ghouls 107
Night of the Living Dead 118
Night Porter, The 243, 317
Night Train Murders 290-292, 331, 342, 343
Night, The *see* *notte, La*
Nightfall 53
Nightmare City 118, 211, 359
Nightmare on Elm Street, A 221
Nights of Terror, The 231, 305, 306
Nightwatch 292-293
 Nikiforuk, Andrew 122
 Nin, Anaïs 57
Nitrate Kisses 97
 Nitsch, Herman 352
 Nitsche, Jack 308
No Way Out 319
 Noble, Steve 95, 98
noche de walgurgis, La 241
noches del hombre lobo, Las 240
 Noe, Gaspar 6, 9, 40, 41-47
 Noel, Bernard 222
Noire 139
Nomads (film segment) 170
Nonthosonno 344
 Norby, Ghita 258
North by Northwest 86
Northanger Abbey (book) 105
Nosferatu 105
note bleue, La 66
Notorious 86
notte, La 131, 296
Noz w Wodzie 147
 Nusciak, Loredana 335
Nuts in May 106
 Nuttall, Jeff 95
Nutty Professor II The Klumps The 106
 Nuytten, Bruno 381
NYPD Blue (TV series) 258
- O.K. Connery 263
 Oakes, Sir Harry 53, 55
Obchod na Korze 109
Oblong Box, The 31
Obsession (book) 222
occhio dielro la parete, L' 293
Octaman 253, 254
Octopus, The *see* *piovra, La*
 O'Dwyer, Larry 176, 179
Odyssey (book) 87
Oedipus Rex 93
 O'Ferrall, Lewis Moore 80
Oh, Whistle and I'll Come to You, My Lad (story) 125, 151
Oil Lamps *see* *Petrolejové Lampy*
 Okking, Jens 258
- Old Dark House The* 105
Omega Man The 118
On Top of the Other 253, 332
Once Upon a Time in America 144
 Ordine 158
One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest 147
One Foot in the Grave (TV series) 107
One Plus One 308
Opera 15, 84, 85, 86, 88, 230, 234, 235, 293-294
 Ophuls, Max 173
Orgasmo *see* *Paranoia*
 Oriandi, Ferdinando 365
 Orlando 96
 O'Rourke, Heather 82
Orphée 256, 286
orbile segreto del Dottor Hichcock, L' *see* *Terror of Dr Hichcock, The*
 Orlolan., Ruz 365
 Osborne, Julie 99
 Oshima, Nagisa 53
 Ossorio, Amado de 126, 264, 266
 Ostrozna, Karolina 362, 364
Other Hell, The 210
Other Side of Midnight, The 318
 Ottenger, Ulrike 240
Otto e Mezzo *see* 8 1/2
Outbreak 121
Outcry, The *see* *gndo, li*
Ovoce Stromu Rajskech Jime 108
 Owe, Baard 258
- Pacino, Al 54
 Packer, Vin 222
Paganini 295-296
Paganini Horror 295
 Paganini, Niccolò 69, 295
 Pagano, Bartolomeo 360
 Pallenberg, Anita 186, 310
 Palmer, Lilli 33
Panic in the Streets 119
Panna a Netvor 108
 Pannu, lo Fernando 269
 Paoletta, Domenico 339
 Papas, Xiro 201
 Parades, Mansa 348, 351
Paradis pour tous 174
 Paradis, Vanessa 187
 Paradjanov, Sergei 167
Paralyzed *see* *Short Night of the Glass Dolls*
Paranoia 252, 260, 332
 Parents 218
 Park, Reg 360
 Parker, Clifton 152
 Parker, Pauline 222, 224
Party and the Guests, The *see* *Slavnosti a Hostech, O*
Pasá? 108, 111
 Pascal, Françoise 321, 324, 325
 Pasolini, Pier Paolo 73, 93, 140, 269, 291, 296, 331, 339, 348, 352, 370
Passage *see* *Pasá?*
Passenger, The 296-297, 298, 299, 300-303, 304, 305
 Passer, Ivan 108
Passion Thpych 96
 Pastore, Sergio 215, 216
 Pastrone, Giovanni 360
 Patnck 305
- Patnck Still Lives* 304, 305-306
Pavoncello 147
 Pawlik, Wlodek 363
Payroll 153
paz empieza nunca La (book) 192
 Peacock, John 35
Pearls of the Deep *see* *Perlicky na Dne*
 Pecheur, Bruce 154
 Pecka, Karel 111
 Peckinpah, Sam 294, 318
 Pedler, Kit 121
 Peellaert, Guy 174
Peeping Tom 252, 294, 370
Peer Gynt (poem) 87
Pehav? Max a strasidla 172
 Peirce, C.S. 297
 Peimán, Jose Maria 192
Penetration *see* *Slasher is the Sex Maniac: The*
 Penman, Ian 8
 Penn, Arthur 313
perfil de Satanás, El 192
Performance 56, 186, 306-311, 369
Pennbaba 172
Perlicky na Dne 108
 Perry, Anne *see* *Hulme Juliet*
Pershing 96
Persona 251, 308, 368, 369, 371
Pest - Die Rückkehr 122
pest in Florenz, Die 117
 Petacci, Claretta 269
petit soldat Le 310
 Petit, Pascale 237
 Petro, Peter 168
Petrolejové Lampy 108, 110
 Petry, Iwona 149, 150
Peyton Place (TV series) 257
Phantasme 320
Phantom of the Opera, The 241
Phenomena 17, 85, 87, 144, 294
 Phoenix, River 305
 Picasso, Pablo 313
 Piccoli, Michel 204, 205
Piccolo grande amore 143
Pictures on Pink Paper 93
 Pierangeli, Anna Maria 253, 254
Pierrot le fou 301, 312-313, 379
 Piersanti, Franco 338
Pig of Hearts 96
 Pilgaard, Ulf 292
 Pilmark, Søren 258
Pink Flamingos 8, 179, 198, 239
 Pink, Floyd 100, 297
Pink Narcissus 313, 314, 315
 Piron, Dominique 218
piovra, La 143
 Pine, David 277
 Pistilli, Luigi 347
 Pitoëff, Sacha 86, 131
 Pitoëff, Sacha 305, 306
 Piacido, Michele 316
Plague, The (1919) *see* *pest in Florenz, Die*
Plague, The (1993) 120
Play the Game or Leave the Bed 213
Player, The 249
Playgirls and the Vampire, The 114
 Pleasance, Donald 80, 81, 83, 245

- Plot of Fear* 314, 316
Początek (short film) 362
 Poe, Edgar Allan 87 106, 269 357
 Pogány, Csstano 293
 Pohl, Fredenck 316
Point Blank 308
Poison 329
 Polanski, Roman 27 107, 147 162, 331, 367
 Poli, Maurice 318
Police Academy (film series) 82
 Polk, Brigid 196 198
 Pollock, Jackson 15
Poltergeist III 82
 Ponce, Ester 262
 Ponce a Eusebio 272
 Ponti, Carlo 21, 22 27, 156, 296
Poor White Trash 178
Poor White Trash Part 2 see Scum of the Earth
 Popeye 249
 Popily 147
 Popper, Karl 368
 Porel, Marc 353
Port of Saints (book) 282
porta sul buio. La (TV series) 317
portiera nuda, La 316-317
Posledni Trk Pana Schwarcewaldea a Pana Edgara 109
Possessed, The (book) 234
Possession 8, 60 61-67, 69-71, 149 234 235, 340, 366, 367-374 375, 376 377-381
 Potter, Sally 96
 Powell, Colin 55
 Powell Michael 252, 370
 Preminger, Otto 158
 Preston, Richard 121
Prêt-à-porter 249
pretora, La 353
Pretty Baby 270
Pretty Princess see Piccolo grande amore
 Price, Dennis 230, 354 355 356
 Price, Vincent 31, 32, 118
Prince Valiant 144
principe nuda, La 244
Prisoner The (TV series) 256, 280, 331
 Prochnow, Jürgen 75
 Proctor, Maurice 245
Projet pour une révolution à New York (book) 134
 Prosperi, Franco 292 323, 342, 359
 Proust, Marcel 101 102
Psycho 58, 98, 107, 215, 242, 253, 294
 Pulliam, June Michele 105
 Purdom, Edmund 140
 Pyun, Albert 122
- Q 264
 Quaglio, José 293
Quaternass (film series) 244
 Quattrini, Paola 212, 213
 Quester, Hugues 321, 324, 325
 Quesb, Giulio 351
Quintet 249
Quo Vadis (silent) 360
- RA 91
 Raab, Kurt 72, 73-75, 340, 341
 Raabjerg, Bngitte 258
- Raban, William 95
Rabid 118, 193, 211, 283, 285, 331
Rabid Dogs 317-319
Rabid Grannies 268
 Rachilde 311
 Rachini, Pasquale 248
 Radok, Alfréd 109
 Rafelson, Bob 173, 297
ragazza che sapeva troppo, La see Evil Eye, The
Ragazza tutta nuda assassinata nel parco 332
Rage 120
 Raho, Umberto 190, 216
 Raimi, Sam 189
Rainbow Thief The 14
raisins de la mort, Les 320
 Rambaldi, Carlo 376, 378
 Randall, Dick 237
Rashomon 238
 Rassimov, Ivan 209 210
Rats, Night of Terror 120
 Ratti, Filippo Walter Mana 336
Raw Meat see Death Line
Raw Nerves The Libidinal Economy of Filmus
Interruptus 96
 Ray, Nicholas 157
 Rayns, Tony 157
 Reagan, Ronald 54
 Reage, Pauline 129
Rear Window 85
Rebel, The 95
Reborn 264
Red Desert, The see deserto rosso, Il
Red River 159
Red Sea The 95, 96
Red Shoe Dianas (TV series) 187
 Redgrave, Vanessa 294, 296
 Reed, Lol 94
 Reedy, Carlyle 95
 Rees-Mogg, Anne 98
 Reeves, Michael 107
 Reeves, Steve 115
 Register, Meg 113, 114
 Regnoli, Piero 114, 305
 Reich, Wilhelm 276
 Reichert, Marcus 330
 Reinhart, Arthur 363
 Reitman, Ivan 80
 Rendell, Ruth 107
 Renfro, Brad 351
 Reno, Jean 187
 Renoir, Jean 161, 165, 218, 323
Requiem for a Vampire 319-320, 321 322
 Resnais, Alain 6 56, 57, 85 87, 130, 132, 133, 287, 369
Return of the Living Dead, The 118
Return to Peyton Place 113
Return to Salem's Lot, A 264
Revenge in the House of Usher 230
Revenge of the Vampire see Black Sunday
 Rey, Fernando 293
 Rey, Georges 96
 Reynaud, Janine 285 287
 Reyre, Mane-Laure 62
 Rhodes, Liz 91-93, 95, 100
Rich and Famous 162
 Richardson, John 233
- Rickels, Laurence A. 240
Riddles of the Sphinx, The 297
Ride Lonesome 318
 Rimbaud, Arthur 195, 310, 311
 Rinaldi, Paola 338
Ring of Darkness 270
 Ripper, Michael 106
 Rivette, Jacques 202 204-206, 209
 Rivière, Caroline 327
Road to Fort Alamo, The 322-323
Rob Roy 27
Robak 323-324
 Robak, Alain 193
 Robbe-Grillet, Alain 56, 87, 129-136 167, 287, 319
Robot Monster 233
 Rocha, Glauber 167
 Roeg, Nicolas 6 53, 55, 56, 59, 249, 313, 369, 379
 Rohm, Maria 354, 355
 Rohmer, Eric 202
 Roifes, Kirsten 185, 258
 Roilin, Jean 7, 130 261, 319 320, 324, 325, 344
Rolling Stone (magazine) 82
 Rolling Stones, The 287, 308
 Romay, Lina 266, 327
 Romero, Emilio 192
 Romero, George A. 39, 87, 118, 120, 211, 212, 330
 Ronder, Jack 121
 Rorschach, Hermann 242
rose de fer, La 321, 324-325
Roselyne and the Lions 193
Rosemary's Baby 34, 331
 Rosenberg, Stuart 188
 Ross, Gene 176, 177-180
 Ross, Howard 236
 Rossini, Roberto 161 296
 Rossi, Drago, Eleonora 253
 Rossi, Stuart, Giacomo 144, 256 334
 Rossi, Stuart, Kim 144
 Rossi, Fausto 333
 Rossington, Norman 80, 83
 Rossi-Stuart, Giacomo 215, 335
 Roussos, Dennis 290
 Rovai, Giulia 335
 Roxy Music 330
Roy Colt and Winchester Jack 236
Rozmowa z człowiekiem z szafy 324
 Runacre, Jenny 301
 Russ, William 50
 Russell, Ken 244, 330
 Rustichelli, Carlo 256
 Ruzzolini, Giuseppe 332
 Ryall, Jane 254
- Sabbah, Hassan I 377
 Sabel, Valena 238
 Sacchetti, Dardano 188, 211, 237
 Sacher-Masoch, Leopold von 356
 Sade, Marquis de 69, 243, 269, 276, 286 327
Sadist of Notre Dame, The 325-328
<Safe> 328-330 334
 Salem, El Hezi Ben 340
 Salemm, Lino 112
 Salemo, Enrico Mana 290
Salò, or the 120 Days of Sodom 126, 140, 291, 331, 348
 Saltzman, Harry 80

- Sampen, Salvatore 317
 Samson 147
 Samson and the Seven Miracles of the World 360
 Samson in King Solomon's Mines 114
 San-Antonio ne pense qu'à ça 224
 Sancho, Fernando 253
 sang des bêtes Le 45
 Santa Sangre 12, 13, 15
 Sarris, Andrew 107
 Sartre, Jean-Paul 85, 87, 129, 195, 200, 319
 Sassi, Aldo 364
 Satan Bug, The 117, 119
 Saturday Night Fever 226
 Saussure, Ferdinand de 87
 Savage Gringo *see* Nebraska il pistolero
 Saxon, George 96
 Saxon, John 211, 212
 Scanners 280, 283
 Scarlet Claw, The 262
 Scenes from a Marriage 71
 Schalken the Painter (story) 151
 Scheider Roy 283
 Schenck, Wolfgang 340
 Schlesinger John 162, 163
 Schlingensief, Christoph 242, 342
 Schmidt, Eckhart 242
 Schnass, Andreas 242
 Schneeman, Carolee 96
 Schneider, Maria 298, 299, 302, 304
 Schoenberg, Arnold 92
 School Outing, A 365
 School's Out *see* Schrei - denn ich werde dich töten!
 Schorm, Eva.d 108, 109
 Schrader, Paul 338
 Schreck, Max 105
 Schrei - denn ich werde dich töten! 261
 Schwarzkogler, Rudolph 352
 Schwechater 92
 Schwitters, Kurt 95
 Schygulla, Hanna 75
 Scorsese, Martin 356
 Scott, Gordon 360
 Scott, Randolph 318
 Scott, Ridley 119
 Scream 261
 Scream and Scream Again 31, 32, 35
 Screen Test (film series) 157
 Scum of the Earth 178-179, 181
 Sea Serpent, The 266
 Searle, Adrian 98
 Season in Hell, A (book) 195, 310
 Season of the Witch 330
 Sebastiane 313
 Secret Nights of Lucrezia Borgia, The 333
 Secret of Dr. Chalmers The 192
 Sedgwick, Edie 158, 159
 Sedm na konán a je mi dobre 172
 Sedmikrásky 108, 172
 See You in Hell Fellows! 170, 172
 sehnsucht nach dem mehr, Die 278
 Selby Jr., Hubert 195
 Sena, Joel 222-224
 Sermon 96
 Serma, Assumpta 272
 Serpent River 96
 Serpent's Egg, The 351
 Serrador, Narciso Ibañez 254
 Serrault, Michel 174
 Servais, Raoul 135
 Servant, The 308
 Seul Contre Tous 41-47
 Sex Variant Women in Literature (book) 222
 Sex, Censorship and the Cinema (book) 94
 Sexy Nite Report 338
 Seying Delphine 131
 Shadow (short film) 224
 Shadowmakers 113
 Shaeffer, Dirk 96
 Shakespeare, William 377
 Shame *see* Skammen
 Shame, The 54
 Sharif, Omar 14
 Sharits, Paul 92
 She Wolf of London 241
 Shelley, Mary 119
 Shepard, Patty 127
 Sheman, Gary 79-83
 She's Curious: Sex 278
 She-Wolf *see* lupa La
 Shivers 118, 193, 283, 285
 Shock 6, 237, 269, 352, 353
 Shock Corridor 272
 Shock Treatment 174, 175, 330-331
 Shop on the High Street, The *see* Obchod na Korze
 Short Cuts 249
 Short Night of the Glass Dolls 292, 331-332
 Shot in the Dark, A 107
 Siege, Don 53
 Sight and Sound (magazine) 8, 82
 Sigl, Robert 260, 261
 Sign of Cancer, The *see* Znamel Raka
 Silent Night Bloody Night 187
 Silenti, Vira 360
 Silver Globe, The *see* Na Srebnym Globie
 Silvi, Franca 198
 sindaco, Il 142
 Singer Bryan 351
 Siodmak, Robert 260
 Sirk, Douglas 330
 Sister Emanuelle 215
 Skammen 147
 Skay, Brigitte 238
 Skeggs Roy 35
 Skinner, Cornelia Otis 151
 Skvorecky, Josef 108, 110
 Sky is Falling/The Sky is Falling The 351
 Sladke Hry Mnelého Léta 110
 Slasher is the Sex Maniac. The 332-333
 Slaughter Hotel *see* Cold-Blooded Beast
 Slavnost a Hostech O 109
 Sleepy Haven 97
 Slides 95
 Sloane, William 125
 Slow Slidings of Pleasure, The *see* Glissements progressifs du plaisir
 Smellpox 2002 Silent Weapon 122
 Smile Before Death 190
 Smith, Geradine 198
 Smith, Jack 91
 Smith, Maria 198
 Smith, N G 96
 Smoke Ghost (book) 153
 Soavi, Michele 6, 17-19, 143, 151, 271, 292, 294
 Society 331
 Soderbergh, Steven 156
 Solanas, Valene 199
 Solar Anus 96
 Solans 149
 Somebody Up There Likes Me 254
 Something Creeping in the Dark 334, 335-336
 Song of Triumphant Love, The 147
 Sonio, Olli 279
 sorcière, La (book) 134
 Sorel, Jean 253, 331, 332
 Spaak, Catherine 339
 Spaghetti Westerns (book) 339
 Spalovac Mrtvol 108-111
 Spasmo 216, 233
 Spectre, The 216
 Spengler, Volker 242
 Soider Labyrinth, The 336-338
 Spider, The 316
 Spielberg Steven 13, 55, 250
 Spike of Bensonhurst 155, 156, 161, 165
 Spillane, Mickey 286
 Spinell, Joe 43, 225, 268
 Spinoza, Baruch 148
 Spiral Staircase, The 209, 260
 Spleen 96
 Spunkie, Annie 98
 Spy in Your Eye 113
 SS Experiment Camp 243
 SS Elsewhere (TV series) 257
 Stacy, John 364
 Stafford Ann 178
 Stagecoach 322
 Stagefright 17, 18, 294
 Stain, Joseph 167
 Stalingrad 144
 Stalker 303
 Stand The 121
 Stanford, Pamela 266
 Star Trek (TV series) 121
 Starcrash 317
 Stardust Memories 294
 Stargazer (book) 25
 Steele, Barbara 124, 125, 126, 353
 Steffen, Anthony 215, 216, 264
 Slegers, Bernice 269
 Stein, Gertrude 94
 Stella 317
 Stella Stellans (TV mini-series) 261
 Stella, Luciano *see* Kendall, Tony
 Stendhal Syndrome, The 70, 143, 144
 Stensgaard, Yutte 31
 Stepford Wives, The 330, 331
 Steploe and Son (TV series) 107
 Stereo 329
 Stevens, George 107
 Stevens, Mark 241
 Stigwood, Robert 197
 St. Iman, Whit 156
 Shvaletti, Sergio 17, 18, 271, 338
 Stockhausen, Karlheinz 287
 Stockwell, Guy 12
 Stoker, Bram 117
 Stona di una monaca clausura 338-339
 Story of Boys and Girls, The 139, 141, 365

- Story of 'O', The (book)* 286
Story of Sin, The *see* *Dzieje Grzechu*
Straight and Narrow 92
Strange Vice of Madame Ward, The *see* *Blade of the Ripper*
Strangers on a Train 210
Straw Dogs 278
Street Trash 15
strelle nel fosso, Le 141
Strp Nude for Your Killer 236
Struthers, Sally 318
Stryker, Jeff 276
Stuff, The 264
Sturges, John 53
Sun-Ra 302
Sunrise 58
Sunset Boulevard 160
Sunshine in a Net 167, 172
Survivors The (TV series) 120, 121
Suspina 85, 87, 88, 113, 126, 180, 189, 291
Sust, David 348, 349 **350**, 351
Sutherland, Donald 62
Suzuki, Daisetz 357
Suzuki, Sejun 167
Svankmajer, Jan 8, 108, 109, 168
Swann, Cordelia 95, 96
Sweet Games of Last Summer *see* *Śladke Gry*
Mineleho Leta
Sykes, Peter 34, 35, 220
Sympathy for the Devil *see* *One Plus One*
Szamanka 61, 62, 64, 67, 71, 149, 150, 367, 373
Szczepanik, Kasia 363, 364
Szinétár, Dóra 260, 261
Szomoriány, Stanislaw 167

TOUCHING 96
Talbi, Salim 275
Tali T, The 318
Tanziani, Paola 364
Tarantino, Quentin 156
Tarkovsky, Andrei 65, 149, 303, 379
Tarot parysky (book) 149
Tatarka, Dominic 168
Tab, Jacques 218
Taxandria 135
Taxi Driver 283, 356
Taylor, Elizabeth 158
Taylor, Jack **191**, 192, 285, 287
Taylor, John Russell 156
Taylor, Ronnie 15
Tazky, Ladislav 169
Teleszynski, Leszek **150**
Temessy, Hédi 260
Templer, The 263
Ten Little Indians (book) 141, 236, 248
Tenanti, The 27
Tenderness of the Wolves **72**, **74**, 75, 242, 339-341, 349
Tenebrae 6, 8, 17, 86-88, 144, 234, 257, 294
Terror 292, 341-342
Terror 2000. Deutschland ausser kontrolle **185**, 342
Terror at Red Wolf Inn 80
Terror Express 343-344
Terror of Dr Hichcock, The 125, 210, 346, 347, 361
Terzano, Ubaldo 323

testimone dello sposi, Il 139
Tetsuo 42
Tevis, Walter 55
Texas Chain Saw Massacre. The 6, 67, 79, 179, 242, 278
Texas Ranger 143
Thatcher, Margaret 94
Theatre of Blood 82
Therese and Isabelle (book) 223
Thesiger, Ernest 34, 105
Thew, Anna 96, **103**, 358
They Saved Hitler's Brain 246
They Use Dark Forces (book) 34
Thing, The 119
Things to Come 28
Third Man, The 32
Third Part of the Night, The *see* *Trzecia Czesć Nocy*
Thomas e gli indemoniati 140
Thomas the Possessed *see* *Thomas e gli indemoniati*
Thomson, David 152
Threads 122
Thriller (TV series) 263
Throbbing Gristle 96
Thrower, Steve 96
Thulin, Ingnd 331
Thurley Abbey (story) 126
Thus Spake Zarathustra (book) 13
Ticket of No Return 240
Tiege, Karel 168
Time Image. The (book) 130
Time Out (magazine) 95
Tiscrocna vcela *see* *Millennial Bee, The*
Titty Twist in Hell. Orpheus and Eurydike in Love 278
Tixou, Thelma 15
To Catch a Thief 86
To the Devil. a Daughter **30**, 33-35, 220
Tognazzi, Ricky 336
Tolstoy, Alexei 289
Tombs of the Blind Dead 126
Tonelli, Bob 365
Tornberg, Jeff 198
Toro, Guillermo del 82
Torso 216
Toth, Barnabás 260
Touch of Death 113
Tourgueniev, Ivan 147
Tourneur, Jacques 152, 153
Tovoli, Luciano 313
Tower of Evil 220
Townsend, Bud 80
Trágica ceremonia en Villa Alexandra 344 **345**, 346-348
Traietment de choc *see* *Shock Treatment*
France 242
Trans-Europe Express 134
Transport to Paradise *see* *Transport z Raj*
Transport z Raj 109
Tras el cristal 348-349, **350**, 351
Trash 22, 25, 29, **154**, 155, 156, 160-162, 164, 198
Treasure of Abbot Thomas, The (story) 151
Trevilian, John 155, 311
Trier, Lars von 6, 9, 69, 122, 234, 257, 259
Tntignant, Jean-Louis 134
Insha (TV show) 106
Instana 192, 351
Truck Stop Women 174

Truffaut, François 173, 202, 296
Try (book) 227
Trzecia Czesć Nocy 147 **150**, 379
Isukamoto, Shinya 42
Tudor, Andrew 119
Tunnel Under the World, The 316
Turner, June **78**
Turner, Kathleen 28
Turner Simon Fisher 96
Tusco, Marcello 364
Tusk 13
Tutti defunti. tranne i morti *see* *Everyone Deceased*
Except for the Dead
Tuwin, Julian 147
Twelve Monkeys 121
Twice Told Tales 113
Twin Peaks (TV series) 70, 257, 259
Twin Peaks. Fire Walk with Me 152
Twitch of the Death Nerve 6, 236, 237, 257, 318, 347
Two Crocodiles. The *see* *deux crocodiles, Les*
Two Evil Eyes 85-87
Tyreil, Susan **194**, 197, 198
Tzu, Lao 358

U-571 144
Uher, Stefan 167, 168
Ulloa, Alejandro 252
Ultimo 2. La sfida 143
Ultimo 2. The Challenge *see* *Ultimo 2. La sfida*
Ultimo minuto *see* *Last Minute*
Ulysses (book) 87
Umliani, Piero 237
Undercurrent 209
Underground London (documentary) 80
Undying Monster, The 240
Unholy Relics (book) 152
Uninvited, The 151
Union City 330
uomo, la donna, la bestia, L' 351-352
Upir z Feratu 108
Upon the Dull Earth (short story) 106
Usual Suspects, The 351

vache qui rumine, La 96
Vagabonde 291
Valentina (TV series) 336
Valen, Valeno 256
Valene and Her Week of Wonders 261
Valene and Her Week of Wonders (book) 168
Vampire Cinema, The (book) 277
vampire nue, La 319
Vampire of Ferat, The *see* *Upir z Feratu*
vampiri, I 114, 152, 269, 360
Vampyr 323
Vampyros Sexos *see* *I Was a Teenage Zabbadoing*
Van Gogh, Vincent 210
Van Sant, Gus 156
Van Suyt, Nick 268
Vandewoestijne, Johan 268
Varda, Agnes 291
Van, Giuseppe 215, 360
Varney the Vampire (book) 117
Vasile, Tun 237
Velasquez, Diego 313
Velevet Underground 94

- Velvet Goldmine* 330
 Venantini, Venantino 343
Venere d'Ille, La 352-354
Vengeance of the Zombies 245
Venus in Furs 287, 327, 354, **355**, 356-357
Venus in Furs (book) 356
 Verdi, Giuseppe 294
 Verhoeven, Paul 198
 Verlaine, Paul 311
 Verley, Renaud 201
 Vernon, Howard 218, **228**, 230, 285, 286
Vertigo 58, 85, 87, 303
 Vertov, Dziga 370
vidas que tú no conoces, Las 192
Video/Void 99, 100, 102, 357-358
Videodrome 15, 107, 252, 280, 283, 285
vie à l'envers, La 173
 Viemy, Sacha 130, 234
 Vigo, Jean 310
 Villa Rojo, Jesús 253
 Villa, Franco 306
Villain 245
 Villaronga, Agustín 348, 349, 351
viol du vampire, Le 319
 Viola, Joe 80
Violent Silence (book) 53, 56-58
Virus 122
 Visconti, Luchino 87, 161, 165, 279, 296, 349
Viva la muerte 351
 Vivaldi, Giana 256
Voidtext 102
 Voight, Jon 162, 163
 Vorse, Niels 122, 258
Voyage, The (poem) 224
voyeur, Le (book) 133
Vtackovia, sirotý a blazní see Birds, Orphans and Fools

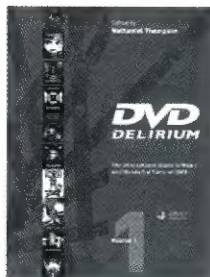
Wagner: The Wehr-Wolf (book) 117
Wait Until Dark 209
 Wajda, Andrzej 147, 149
 Walker, Pete 221
 Wallach, Eli 316
 Walrond, Carrie 38
 Walsh, M. Emmet 178
Wanda the Wicked Warden 357
War of the Zombies 360
 Warbeck, David 113, 263
 Warhol, Andy 8, 21, 22, 25, 26, 28, 29, 86, 93, 94, 96, 97, 99, 155-160, 162, 163, 195, 197-200, 308, 310, 314
Warning Sign 120
Warning to the Curious, A (story) 151
 Warren, Joseph *see* Vari, Giuseppe
 Warren, Kenneth J. **219**
Wasteland, The (book) 227
 Waters, John 8, 28, 198, 242, 326
 Watkins, Peter 210, 296
 Watson, Cecil 82
 Weaver, Sigourney 119
 Weber, Anton 92
Weekend 312, 313, 343
 Weenick, Annabelle **176**, 177, 178
 Weill, Kurt 94
 Wein, Chuck 159
Weird Woman 153

 Weller, Peter **281**
 Welles, Orson 173, 305, 318
 Wells, H.G. 151
 Wendel, Lara 270
Werewolf and the Yeti, The 262
Werewolf of London, The 240, 262
Werewolf's Shadow 126, **127**, 245, 262
 West, Roland 105
 Whale, James 105, 106, 119
What Counts is Loving see important c'est d'amer, L'
What Have I Done to Deserve This? 271
What? 27
 Wheatley, Dennis 34, 220
When Alice Broke the Looking Glass see Touch of Death
When the Bell Rings 200
Whip and the Body 126, 353
White Cannibal Queen 230
White People, The (book) 105
White Powder, The (story) 151
 Whitehead, Peter 227
 Whitelaw, Billie 245
 Whitlock, F.A. 378, 379
 Whitman, Stuart 263
Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? 200
Wicker Man, The 82, 107
 Wicking, Christopher 31-35, 220, 221
 Widmark, Richard 35
Wild Beasts 358-359
Wild Boys, The (book) 282
Wild Eye, The 316
 Wilhelm, Janus 148, 149
 Willeman, Paul 361
 Williams, John 250
 Williams, Kenneth 107
 Williams, Linda 373
 Williamson, Kevin 107
 Willis, Bruce 121
Willows, The (book) 105
 Wilson, Colin 142, 222
 Wilson, Lambert 234, 235
 Wilson, Richard 95
Winding Up 96
 Winner, Vic 246
 Winslet, Kate 222
 Wisdom, Norman 106
 Wise, Robert 120, 152
Witch Way Love 187
Witchfinder General 82, 107
Witch's Curse, The 359-361
 Witkin, Joel-Peter 352
 Wittgenstein, Ludwig 306, 371
Wolf Man, The 118, 153, 240
 Wollen, Peter 297, 306
Women in Revolt 29, 156, 163
Women's Camp 119 8, 361-362
 Woo, John 245
 Wood, Edward D. 105, 107
 Wood, Robin 80, 82, 107
 Woodlawn, Holly 29, 160, 162, 163
Would You Kill a Child? 254
Wrory 362-364
Wurdalak, The (story) 289
 Wybenga, Roland 336
 Wyeth, Jamie 198
 Wyngarde, Peter 153

 Yacowar, Maurice 26, 156, 165
 Yamash'ta, Stomu 250
 Yarborough, Jean 335
 Yentob, Alan 55
Yesterday's Enemy 244
Yibola bing du see Ebola Syndrome
Yojimbo 250
 York, Susannah 181, 249-251
You'll Die At Midnight 270
Yound Indiana Jones Chronicles, The (TV series) 187
 Yuzna, Brian 331

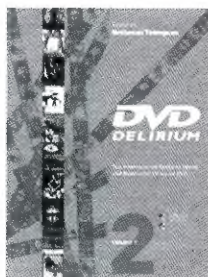
 Zabalza, José Maria 241
Zabnskie Point 86, 297
 Zanussi, Krzysztof 149
 Zapponi, Bernadino 316
Zbehovia a Pútnici 109, **166**, 168-170, 172
Zeder (Voices from the Beyond) 139, 141, **145**, 364-365
 Zeno 358
Zero de conduite 310
 Zerowski, Stefan 147
 Zimmer, Pierre 134
 Zinny, Veronica 269, **274**
Zivot II (book) 168
Znamei Raka 108
Zombi 3 362
Zombie 3 see Nights of Terror, The
Zombie 90: Extreme Pestilence 118, 242
Zombie Creeping Flesh 212, 361
Zombie Flesh-Eaters 113, 211
Zombie Holocaust 200
Zombie Lake 322
Zoo Story, The (play) 301
 Zsigmond, Vilmos 251
 Zulawski, Andrzej 6, 8, **60**, 61-71, 147-150, 233-236, 272, 275, 340, **366**, 367-374, 377-381
 Zulawski, Jerzy 148
 Zulawski, Lukasz 147
 Zulawski, Matheau 147
 Zulawski, Mirosław 147
 Zurl, Guido 80

More Essential Cinema Books from FAB Press



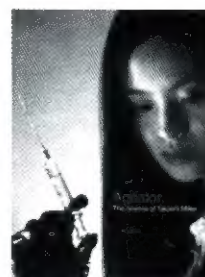
DVD Delirium volume 1

ISBN 1-903254-04-3
640pp, 190mm x 135mm
UK £14.99 / US \$19.99



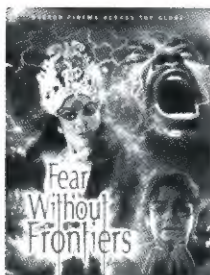
DVD Delirium volume 2

ISBN 1-903254-25-6
640pp, 190mm x 135mm
UK £14.99 / US \$19.99



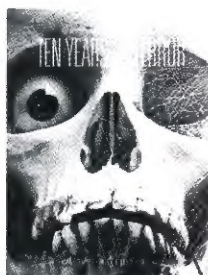
Agitator: the cinema of Takashi Miike

ISBN 1-903254-21-3
408pp, 244mm x 171mm
UK £16.99 / US \$24.99



Fear Without Frontiers

ISBN 1-903254-15-9
320pp, 246mm x 189mm
UK £19.99 / US \$29.99



Ten Years of Terror: British Horror Films of the 1970s

ISBN 1-903254-08-6
336pp, 300mm x 240mm
UK £35.00 / US \$49.95



Flesh & Blood Compendium

ISBN 1-903254-10-8
456pp, 246mm x 189mm
UK £19.99 / US \$29.99



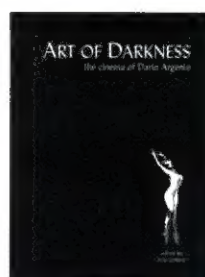
The Haunted World of Mario Bava

ISBN 1-903254-05-1
352pp, 297mm x 210mm
UK £24.99 / US \$34.99



Beyond Terror: the films of Lucio Fulci

ISBN 0-9529260-6-7
312pp, 300mm x 240mm
UK £24.99 / US \$39.99



Art of Darkness: the cinema of Dario Argento

ISBN 1-903254-14-0
320pp, 297mm x 210mm
UK £24.99 / US \$34.99

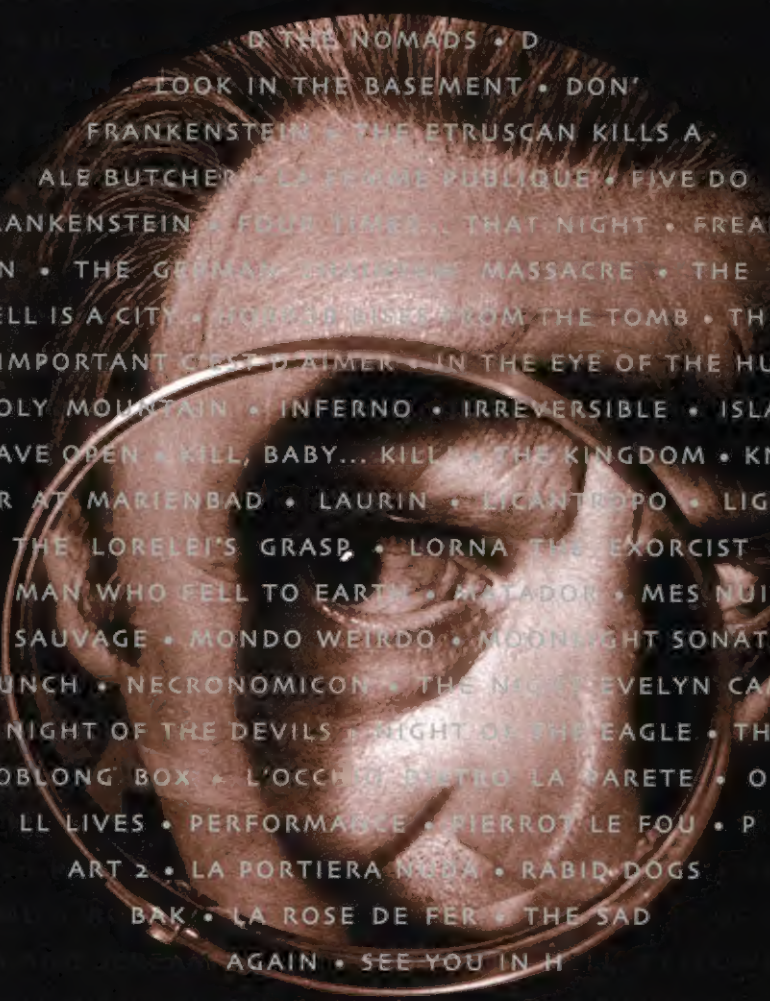
For further information about these books visit our online store, where we also have a fine selection of DVDs, soundtrack CDs, T-shirts and magazines from all over the world!

www.fabpress.com



**"A FEAST OF INSIGHTS INTO THE CINEMA AT ITS MOST OBSCURE, EXCESSIVE
AND MARGINALISED, AND ALSO A GREAT DEAL OF FUN"**

- Ramsey Campbell -



THE NOMADS • D
LOOK IN THE BASEMENT • DON'
FRANKENSTEIN • THE ETRUSCAN KILLS A
ALE BUTCHER • LA FEMME PUBLIQUE • FIVE DO
RANKENSTEIN • FOUR TIMES • THAT NIGHT • FREAK
MAN • THE GERMAN EXPLOSION MASSACRE • THE GES
• HELL IS A CITY • HORROR RISES FROM THE TOMB • THE HO
S • L'IMPORTANT C'EST D'AIMER • IN THE EYE OF THE HURRIC
HE HOLY MOUNTAIN • INFERNO • IRREVERSIBLE • ISLAND OF
MY GRAVE OPEN • KILL, BABY... KILL • THE KINGDOM • KNIFE OF
ST YEAR AT MARIENBAD • LAURIN • LICANTROPO • LIGHT MUS
OYS • THE LORELEI'S GRASP • LORNA THE EXORCIST • LUCK
• THE MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH • MATADOR • MES NUITS SON
INETS SAUVAGE • MONDO WEIRDO • MOONLIGHT SONATA • M
ED LUNCH • NECRONOMICON • THE NIGHT EVELYN CAME O
N • NIGHT OF THE DEVILS • NIGHT OF THE EAGLE • THE N
OBLONG BOX • L'OCCHIO DIETRO LA PARETE • OPE
LL LIVES • PERFORMANCE • PIERROT LE FOU • P
ART 2 • LA PORTIERA NUDA • RABID DOGS
BAK • LA ROSE DE FER • THE SAD
AGAIN • SEE YOU IN H

cult cinema / culture



UK £16.99 / US \$24.99

ISBN 1-903254-17-5



9 781903 254172 >

with contributions from

*Kim Newman, Daniel Bird, Alan Jones, Ramsey Campbell, Stefan Jaworzyn, Marcelle Perks, Tim Lucas,
Mark Ashworth, Ron Peck, Anna Thew, Nigel Burrell, Marcus Stiglegger, Martin Lindwedel, Chris Barber,
Max Décharné, Mitch Davis, Daniel Craddock, Pete Tombs, Charlie Phillipps, Paul Buck, David Kerekes,
Grant Pettitt, Craig Ledbetter, Travis Crawford, David Prothero and Foxy Gifford*